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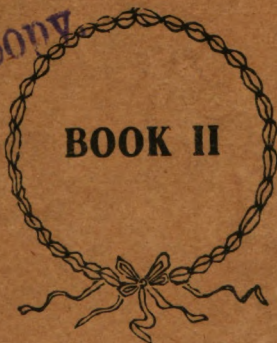
By

DR. HERMAN BAAR

*Formerly Superintendent of the Hebrew
Orphan Asylum, New York*

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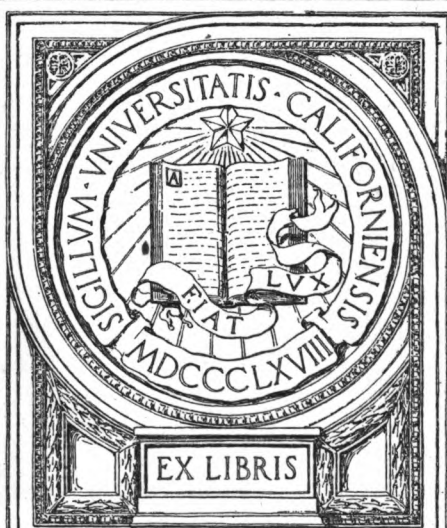
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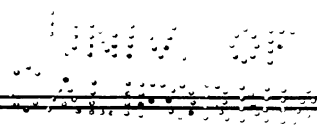
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BOOK II

FROM LEVITICUS TO SAMUEL



New York

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BIBLE LESSONS

BOOK II

I. THE ETHICAL LAWS

Besides the laws governing sacrificial worship, God has also given moral laws to his people Israel. As the source of these moral or ethical laws, our heavenly Father, in the words, "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord thy God, am holy," becomes the sublime ideal for everything that is good and great, true and just, merciful and compassionate, pure and holy. We look up to Him as the Divine Example to inspire us in everything that we do and all that we say. Knowing that He is holy, we must sanctify His name by practicing the following precepts:

1. "Every man shall fear his mother and his father and keep My Sabbaths, for I am the Lord your God." Unlike the Fifth Commandment, in which the father is mentioned before the mother, here the mother comes first. Usually we find that children obey the father more than the mother. To give her the same control and authority over the children as has the father, the mother is mentioned here first. In honoring our parents, we revere our earthly benefactors, while in sanctifying the Sabbath day we adore and worship our

6. Bible Lessons

heavenly Father. Thus filial devotion is closely connected with the keeping of the Sabbath.

2. "When thou reapest the harvest of thy land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field; neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. Thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard, but thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger: for I am the Lord thy God." Note how the poor and the stranger are remembered here, but the gifts mentioned are not put into their hands—these they must gather themselves (Self-help).

3. "Thou shalt not steal, neither deal falsely, nor lie to another." Honesty, faithfulness, and truthfulness are three virtues of great importance in dealing with our fellow-men.

4. "Thou shalt not swear falsely by My Name, nor shalt thou profane the name of thy God; I am the Lord." Let thy "yes" be "yes" and thy "no" be "no." Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God by mentioning it too often, by calling on Him as a witness in an unrighteous matter or trivial affair.

5. "Thou shalt not rob thy neighbor nor deceive him; the wages of the hired shall not abide with thee over night." "Fair and Square" should be our motto in dealing with our neighbor. What a noble spirit of justice is contained in the sentence which tells us not to keep the wages of a laborer over night!

6. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear

thy God: I am the Lord." We ought not to slander our neighbor in his absence, for since he cannot hear us and defend himself, it is cowardly on our part to speak ill of him; nor should we put a stumbling-block before the blind, that is, we must not mislead an innocent and inexperienced person so as to injure him or to cause him to do some wrong.

7. "Thou shalt not judge unrighteously: thou shalt not pity the poor nor honor the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor." In case of judgment, neither pity for the poor nor preference for the rich should influence us in our judgment; just and impartial must we be in our decisions.

8. "Thou shalt not be a tale-bearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand idle when thy neighbor's life is in danger." To slander or to carry evil news from one to another is a most mischievous act. Concerning the precept not to remain indifferent to our neighbor's danger, it is our duty to use every effort to save a man from threatening misfortune. We must always bear in mind the good example of Abraham, who, when Lot was in peril, at once hastened to his rescue.

9. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." Rather correct his faults and tell him frankly what you have against him. We must not hate any one, but rather try to please and love every one. If we have any complaints to make, let us do it openly and frankly. A calm and peaceable understanding, free from all anger, settles many a dispute.

II. THE ETHICAL LAWS—*Continued*

10. "Thou shalt not avenge or bear ill-will against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹד)."
 Revenge is one of man's fiercest passions. We sometimes hear a person say, "I shall not rest until I have avenged myself." Such words make a brute of man. The best means of revenge are Pity and Forgiveness, for by these qualities we prove we are superior to our enemies. Concerning the words "Love thy neighbor as thyself," we find their best explanation in Hillel's great motto: "Whatever you yourself do not like, do it not to others." Once a heathen came to Hillel and asked that he tell him the principles of our religion in one sentence. To this Hillel answered: "Love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the whole law. All other things are but explanations of it." We must honor the likeness of God even in the sinner, and should we treat him unkindly, true religion will say: "In spite of all his failings, he is a human being like thyself." The love of God and of mankind is, after all, the foundation of true religion.

11. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man and fear thy God: I am the Lord." Respect and esteem for the aged were always noted traits of character among the Israelites. The young rose before a gray head, and offered him a seat with due

respect and honor. It is said that Rabbi Jochanan ben Saccai, one of the greatest sages of his time, although himself an old man, usually rose before a hoary head, whether of Jew or non-Jew.

12. "If a stranger sojourn with thee in thy land, thou shalt not vex him. He shall be unto thee as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." What a noble spirit flows from these words! In spite of our present education and enlightenment, we by no means always practice this virtue. Strangers in a country have still to endure more or less the national and race prejudice. There were two kinds of strangers in old Israel. The "Ger Zedek" was of foreign descent, but had embraced Judaism; the "Ger Toshab" was likewise of foreign descent, but not a proselyte, yet could live in the country and partake of all its benefits.

13. "Thou shalt not do any unrighteousness in judgment, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just 'epha,' and a just "hin" shall ye have; I am the Lord thy God." Truthfulness, as well as the strictest honesty and righteousness, in our dealings with men, should be our highest aim and object. The bread we eat must be earned honestly. Not the slightest taint should rest upon it.

14. "If thy brother become poor and fallen in decay with thee, thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or sojourner, so that he may live with thee." Charity has at all times been a great virtue among Israelites. The poor man

who shares the little he has with his fellow-man, and the rich man who willingly aids the needy with his means, are equally good and noble. The word benevolence (*Zedoka*) is a household word among our people. On account of the great number of our poor, our charitable works in modern times have been greatly enlarged and placed upon a better, more rational and scientific basis. However, much still remains to be done in private and public benevolence.

We live under different conditions now, and do not come so often in contact with the poor. We have homes for the orphan, hospitals for the sick, and comfortable dwellings for the aged. In times long passed, a poor man or traveler was usually invited, at least on Friday evening or Sabbath noon, to dine in our homes.

15. "Thou shalt not rule thy servant with rigor." Mild means go much further than severe measures. It is the warm sun, and not the violent storm, that melts the ice from the surface of the ground. A word spoken in a cordial and loving way seldom fails to make a deep impression. A torrent of abuse may frighten for a moment, but it is mainly the power of the gentle voice that brings about gradual improvement. All men in public office, in schools, and in business houses should ever remember these words: "Thou shalt not rule thy servant with rigor."

III. THE SABBATH AND FESTIVALS

We have spoken already of the Sabbath day and its sanctity, and how necessary the Sabbath is for our spiritual uplifting. Had we not the Sabbath day, we would give ourselves up entirely to worldly matters. The same can be said about the festivals. Religious festivals are means by which we are turned away from the activities of everyday life and are lifted up to a higher plane of human thought and reflection. Ever men engaged in spiritual work all the time need such days of rest.

In keeping the Sabbath and festivals the number seven (7) plays an important part. The Sabbath was celebrated on the seventh day of the week. Seven weeks after the Passover festival, the feast of Shabuoth, or Weeks, was solemnized. Seven months later, on the first of Tishri, was Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. After six years of tilling, the soil was given a rest during the seventh or Sabbath year, and after seven times seven years, in the fiftieth or Jubilee year, liberty was proclaimed throughout the land. Then the Israelitish servant was made free, and all pledged farm property was returned to its original owner, free of all debt.

We celebrate our festivals in the lunar months, the names of which are: Nissan, Iyar, Sivan, Tamus, Av, Elul, Tishri, Marcheswan, Kislev, Tebeth, Shevat, Adar, and in the leap year we have

another month, We-adar. There are three festivals of joy also, called "Sholaush R'golim" (three feet). They are *Pesach*, *Shabuoth*, and *Succoth*. They are called Sholaush R'golim because the people who lived in the country were ordered to go to Jerusalem three times a year, and there to worship God in the Sanctuary. Their presence in Jerusalem strengthened the national and religious spirit of the whole people. Women and children were relieved of this duty; but every seventh year, during the Succoth festival, all persons, the women as well as the children, had to appear in the Holy City.

The first festival which we celebrate is *Passover* (פסח), which lasts from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of Nissan. It is called "Passover," because the Lord passed over the houses of the Israelites when He slew the Egyptians. It serves to recall the freeing of our people from Egyptian bondage. It is a festival of liberty, of joy, and of early spring. Not only do we celebrate it in our homes on the first evenings, by telling the story of the liberation from Egypt (*Seder*), but it has also special solemnity because we attend divine services on the first and last days. During the feast we eat the unleavened cakes or *Mazzoth*, because our forefathers left Egypt in such haste that they had not time even to bake bread. The Mazzoth is also called "Lechem Oni," bread of poverty, and brings home to us the lesson that in misfortune we must not despair, and in prosperity we must not become haughty or proud.

From the second day of Pesach, when, as a thank-offering, a measure, or "Omer," of the first ripe barley was brought into the Temple, we count seven weeks to the fiftieth day, which is *Shabuoth*. Then the first gathered wheat was taken to the Temple. Our confirmation ceremony takes place on Shabuoth (שבועות), or the Feast of Weeks, because it is the most fitting day for admitting children into their religious community. The festival receives added meaning and importance from the fact that it was the very day on which the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai. The feeling of liberty, gained on the Pass-over festival, was thus hallowed and strengthened by the laws given at Sinai on Shabuoth.

The third festival, celebrated in the fall season, on the fiftieth day of Tishri, is called the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (*Succoth*) (סוכות). It impresses upon our minds the story of our forefathers' journey through the wilderness, when the Lord protected them in frail tabernacles. It is also called the Harvest Festival, when every one should give thanks for the harvest he has reaped. Four kinds of plants are then brought into the house of God. This harvest thank-offering is made up of the citron (*esrog*), the palm-tree (*lulab*), the myrtle (*hadassah*), and the willow by the brook (*araba*). Whether we are rich or poor, a common feeling and an interest for the welfare of all should always make us live at peace and in unity.

The seventh day of the Succoth Festival was celebrated in the Temple with great solemnity.

Prayers for a fruitful season were offered, and as such prayers were often expressed in these entreating words, "O God, help us!" (Hosh'ana), the day was called *Hosh'ana Rabba*.

The concluding festival following immediately on Hosh'ana Rabba, is no part of the Succoth. It is an independent feast, called *Sh'mini Atzereth*. As the winter then sets in, prayers were offered to the Almighty that the soil for the new crop might be fertile.

After *Sh'mini Atzereth*, *Simchath Torah* follows. On this day the last chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses is read and the first chapter of the First Book is begun anew.

IV. HOLY DAYS AND FEASTS

Although we should always try to review our moral and religious actions, there are, nevertheless, two special festivals on which we must look into our innermost hearts, to reflect on all our sins, and to ask God's forgiveness. These days are called "Yomim Noroim," the days of pious and earnest thoughts.

The most sacred time of the year begins with the first day of Tishri, *Rosh Hashana* (ראש השנה). This festival has different names. It is called the Day of Remembrance (Yom Hasikoron). We must be mindful of the fact that we are of dust and ashes, and that our life passes away like the flower that dies, and like the wind that sweeps the clouds. Secondly, it is called "Yom Teruah," the Day of

Blowing the *Shofar* or Trumpet. This ceremony not only reminds us of the great revelation on Sinai, but it is also to recall us from evil ways. Thirdly, it is called "Yom Hadin," the Day of Judgment. It does not only impress on us the old belief, that on this day God in His mercy judges the world, but also that above the stars there dwells that Eternal Being who will judge all men in righteousness and mercy.

The days between Rosh Hashana and *Yom Kippur* (יום כיפור) are called the ten penitential days. The tenth day of Tishri is the Day of Atonement, on which we abstain from all food, offer prayers the whole day in the synagogue, confess our sins and promise God to lead a better life. Every one, although he may think himself the most perfect mortal on earth, needs such a day of solemn review of his actions and of moral uplifting. We also must be reconciled with every one and forgive our enemies before we ask God's forgiveness or pardon.

There are other fasts, which, closely connected with our political and national disasters, are observed by our people. These occur on:

1. The tenth of Tebeth (commencement of the siege of Jerusalem).
2. The seventeenth of Tamus (the storming of Jerusalem).
3. The ninth of Ab (the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple).
4. The third day of Tishri (the murder of Gedaliah, an eminent man in Israel).

The destruction of Jerusalem took place either

(II. Kings xxv. 8) on the seventh or (Jeremiah lii. 12) the tenth day of Ab. The day of mourning, however, was fixed on the ninth of Ab, as then the hand of death was most grievously felt. On that terrible day, so tradition tells us, the first and second Temples were destroyed. The Sabbath before the ninth of Ab is usually called the Sabbath of Mourning, and the Sabbath after is called the Sabbath of Comfort.

Two other important festivals, celebrated during the winter months, are Chanukah and Purim. The *Chanukah* festival, commencing on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, and lasting eight days, commemorates the great deeds of Judah Maccabee, who, with his four brave brothers and a small number of gallant soldiers, rescued their people from the hands of the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes. He restored the sanctuary in Jerusalem to its holiness; for the idols were then thrown out from the Temple. This festival is also called the Festival of Light, as a small jar of oil, it is said, was sufficient to light the Sanctuary for eight days in succession. Lights are kindled, therefore, during this time in all our temples and dwellings. We should make of this festival a special celebration in our homes, in memory of the great heroes of our glorious history.

Judah Maccabee was one of the greatest heroes of his age. One might really compare him to Hannibal, to Cæsar, to Alexander, or to Napoleon; for with a few followers he was able to drive out the enemy and establish Jewish independence.

We celebrate *Purim*, the second festival, on the fourteenth of Adar. *Purim* means "Lots," and it was Haman's (a most wicked Amalekite) superstitious belief that in casting lots he could find out the day and month on which the Hebrews in the Persian capital of Shushan should be destroyed. How completely he was defeated in his malicious design, and how heavily he had to pay for his evil plot by his own death and that of his family, is fully told in the Book of Esther. Esther and Mordecai are mentioned in this book as the true benefactors of our people.

It is a pity that we do not celebrate our *Purim* festival more fittingly. Though the name of God is not mentioned a single time in the Book of Esther, still we look upon this book as a comfort and source of hope while we are scattered all over the earth. Every word and sentence in the book convinces us that the spirit and power of God are against every persecution which threatens or injures us. In fact, this thought fortifies and upholds us in every hardship and in every trial that we must meet. The *Purim* festival was formerly observed by giving charitable gifts (*Schlach-Monaus*) and handsome presents on that day.

V. PREPARING TO MARCH

After the Children of Israel had left Egypt and were encamped for some time near Mt. Sinai, they were again ordered to resume their journey.

As they had to fight their enemies in the desert and in Canaan, the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to count those men who were fit to serve as soldiers. Moses and Aaron did so, and found that they could count on an army of six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty (603,550) men. The Levites were not included in that number, because they had to take care of the Tabernacle and could not serve in the army. Their number, however, was taken separately, and it was found that there were eight thousand five hundred and eighty (8,580) men to assist in the service of the Lord and to aid Aaron in his priestly duties. They had to remain in active service from their twenty-fifth to their fiftieth year.

That among the Israelites there must have been some wealthy men, we learn from the handsome presents brought at this time to the Sanctuary. The heads or princes of each tribe brought six covered wagons and twelve oxen; also dishes, bowls, and spoons made of silver and gold to be used for the service in the Tabernacle. The wagons, drawn by the cattle, Moses gave to the Levites for use in moving the different parts of the Tabernacle, when the Israelites traveled. These wagons carried the heavy curtains and the boards forming the walls of the Tabernacle, and the brass pillars around the Court. The ark, however, and the golden table, the golden candle-sticks, the golden altar, and the brass altar were not placed in wagons, but were carried on the shoulders of the Levites.

The camp of Israel was square in shape. In the center thereof stood the Sanctuary, around which, on three sides, rested the Kehatites, the Merarites, and the Gersonites of the tribe of Levi; the fourth side was occupied by Moses, Aaron, and the priests. All the other twelve tribes, three of which formed a special section, dwelt around the camp. In order to infuse a martial spirit into each tribe, every section had its banner or flag. Thus the banner of Judah was marked with a lion according to the words of Scripture, "Judah is a young lion"; the banner of Reuben with a man; Ephraim's emblem was a bullock, and Dan's either an eagle or a serpent.

According to a traditional version, the three tribes Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon—comprising one section—marched in front of the multitude. Judah, the young lion, was the head and arm; Issachar, whose banner bore the sun and moon, represented mental and intellectual labor; and Zebulon, on whose banner was a ship, pointed to the great commercial and trading interests. Thus physical strength (Judah), mental and intellectual labor (Issachar), and mercantile enterprise (Zebulon) represented the three chief divisions of human life.

VI. IN THE DESERT

It was the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year of their going out from Egypt, that the Israelites started from the wilderness

of Sinai, and went toward the desert of Paran. When the Ark would move, Moses would say these words, "Rise up, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." When the Ark would stop, he would say, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

The people, however, became impatient and made trouble, probably being influenced by the Egyptians who had gone with them. Their murmurings displeased God very much. His anger was kindled against them, and the fire of the Lord burnt amongst them and consumed all those that were in the uttermost part of the camp. The people cried for help, and Moses prayed to the Lord and the fire was extinguished. The name of the place was called "Tabera," because the fire of the Lord burnt among them. However, this punishment did not silence them. There were still those among them who stirred them up to make further complaint. The people commenced to cry and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?"

When Moses heard that all the people wept, every man weeping in the door of his tent, he became sorely grieved in his heart, and said unto the Lord: "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? Wherefore have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all these people upon me? Whence shall I take flesh to give unto all these people? The burden is too heavy for me. Kill me, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy eyes and let me not see my

wretchedness." And the Lord said unto Moses: "Gather seventy of the elders of Israel and bring them into the Tabernacle, that they may stand there with thee and assist thee with thy burdens. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and put it upon them, so that they shall help you to bear the burden of the people, that thou needest not bear it alone. But to the people say: 'Sanctify yourselves again to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh, for you have wept in the ears of the Lord.' "

Moses's appeal to God to take his life, because the burden laid on him was too heavy, and his doubt in God's almighty power to provide the people with food, were signs of momentary weakness and discouragement. But such hours of faint-heartedness and despair have been noticed in the lives of other great men; for instance, in the life of Elijah (I. Kings xix. 4), Jonah (iv. 3), Jeremiah (ii. 14), and Job (vii. 16).

Moses did as the Lord commanded him concerning the elders. Scripture here speaks of a most beautiful trait in the character of Moses, which reveals to us his great modesty. For the purpose of forming the so-called Council of Seventy Elders, Moses ordered that six men be chosen from each tribe, so there were seventy-two men; thus two were not needed. However, as he did not like to offend any one, he directed that seventy written and two unwritten tickets should be deposited in an urn. Those who drew the written tickets were selected as Elders; the others,

who drew the unwritten tickets, had to withdraw. Unfortunately, Eldad and Medad were the names of those who thus had to be excluded; however, the spirit of God descended upon the seventy-two, and when, therefore, Eldad and Medad, stirred with the power of their sacred functions, continued to prophesy in the camp, a messenger ran to Moses to tell him of this matter. Then Joshua, Moses's faithful but overzealous pupil, spoke to him, saying, "My master Moses, forbid it them."

Then Moses replied with touching humility: "Art thou jealous on my account? Would to God that all the people of the Lord were prophets and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them."

It came to pass just as God had said; flesh was given to the people. A wind arose and drove quails up from the sea and scattered them over the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp and about two cubits high over the face of the earth. The people on that day and the following day gathered the quails; he that had taken the least had gathered ten chomers (ten pails full); and they spread them out round about the camp. The flesh had not yet been eaten, when the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and He smote them with a great plague. The name of the place was "Kibroth-hattavah" (the grave of lust or greediness), because those greedy people died there.

A man whose whole nature is centered on eat-

ing and drinking and on giving way to his bodily appetites, is as much disliked as is the habitual drunkard. Many persons die early because of their evil habits.

Was it not painful enough to Moses to listen constantly to the daily complaints of his people? Now he is to bear even the attacks of members of his own family, of his own sister Miriam and his brother Aaron. It seems that Miriam, by her loose tongue and jealous temper, was the principal cause of this family trouble; yea, she even succeeded, by her persuasion, in making peaceful Aaron join her in the quarrel. The whole force of her anger was conveyed in these offensive words: "Has then only the Lord spoken with Moses? Has He not spoken also with us?"

Moses viewed the whole matter with the greatest calmness; neither complaint nor excuse came from his lips. In fact, Moses was the meekest of men. He left his defense to others. Really, he could not find a better defender of his character than God Himself. God's anger was kindled against them, and, behold, Miriam became leprous. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "O God, heal her, I beseech Thee."

But the Lord did not forgive her so quickly. Being afflicted with leprosy, she was for seven days confined outside the camp; then she was readmitted after having been cured. The disputes and strifes brought about by our own relatives—by our own flesh and blood—give us much more vexation and grief than all the disappointments caused by our friends and acquaintances.

VII. THE SPIES

At the command of God, Moses sent twelve men from Kadesh to spy out the promised land of Canaan. For this purpose, he selected from each tribe a man of prominence, or, as the Bible says, the very prince who stood at the head of the tribe. Among these men were two distinguished characters, Caleb, the son of Yephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. Moses said unto them: "Go and see the land, what it is, and the people who dwell therein; whether it is good or bad; what the cities are in which they dwell, whether they live in open places or in strongholds; and what is the land, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be trees therein or not, and take ye courage and bring with you some of the fruits of the land."

These twelve men went and spied out the land, and, as this was the time when the grapes ripened, they cut down a branch with one cluster which was so large that two men had to carry it on poles. They took likewise some pomegranates and figs with them. At the end of forty days they returned, and reported to Moses and all the people what they had seen.

They gave at first a most flattering account of the land, saying that what they had seen was very good, that the land was flowing with milk and honey and abundant in all kinds of fruit. Having told the truth so far, they completed

the picture by painting it in the darkest colors. They said that the inhabitants were mighty and powerful, that they dwelt in fortified cities and that they had seen men of great stature, looking like real giants. Compared to these giants, they themselves were in their own eyes and in the eyes of those people only "tiny grass-hoppers."

Greatly excited by such an untruthful and exaggerated account, the people felt very much dissatisfied, and expressed their discontent by lamenting and weeping throughout the entire night. Joshua and Caleb tried to calm and pacify the people by saying: "Do not feel downcast and discouraged; both of us have also seen the land, and we can easily go up and overcome its inhabitants." However, the other ten persons, speaking in opposition to these two, said, "We are unable to do it, for they are stronger than we." In all human affairs there is always a difference of opinion between "I can" and "I cannot." There is nothing impossible in this world.

The ten men, with their evil reports, wrought the whole congregation to such a pitch of excitement that they rebuked Moses and Aaron, saying: "Wherefore does the Lord bring us unto yonder land to fall by the sword, and that our wives and our children become a prey to those people? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" And they said one to another, "Let us appoint a chief and return to Egypt."

Then Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before all the assembly, and Joshua and Caleb rent

their garments and tried to convince the people of their folly, saying: "Oh, do not rebel against the Lord, for as long as He is with us we have nothing to fear!" But the people were angry, and responded with the violent cry: "Let us stone them! Let us stone them!"

On account of this fearful rebellion, the Lord appeared to Moses, saying: "How long shall these people provoke Me? I will smite them with pestilence and root them out from the face of the earth, and I will make of thee a great nation."

But Moses said unto the Lord: "I beseech Thee, let the great power of the Lord be made manifest as Thou hast spoken, saying, 'The Eternal is long-suffering and abundant in goodness, forgiving iniquity and transgression.' Forgive the sins of Thy people, out of Thy goodness, as Thou hast been indulgent to them from Egypt even until now."

Then the Lord said: "I have forgiven them their sins on account of thy words. But as truly as I live, and as truly as the earth is filled with My glory, all those men who have seen My power and My signs, which I have shown in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tried Me sorely these ten times and have not hearkened unto My voice, shall not see the land which I have sworn to their fathers—yea, all those who have provoked Me, shall not see it. To-morrow, turn you and go forward into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea. In this wilderness all their bodies shall fall; all who are above twenty years of age shall die in the desert, and their children shall wander about

in the wilderness for forty years. Only Joshua and Caleb shall enter the land of Canaan, because they have been faithful and truthful to Me."

When Moses announced these words to the people, they were much grieved and said, "We will go up to the place of which the Lord has spoken, for we have sinned." But Moses said: "Wherefore do you now transgress the order of the Lord? For you will not succeed in it."

These words ought to be heeded by every one, because whatever is against the spirit and will of God cannot succeed. "Do not go up," Moses continued, "for the Lord is not with you." They persisted, however, in going to the top of the mountain, but Moses and the Ark of the Covenant did not move out of the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites that dwelt on the mountain, came down and smote them.

People who are afraid of surmounting great obstacles are like the spies. In the eyes of those who lack courage, every difficult task is a kind of "giant."

While the common people in the desert were continually complaining of the bad food they had to eat, we note that the princes of the community showed neither ardent devotion nor a spirit of bravery in doing that which they had to do.

It is a historical fact that as soon as Israel shows any indifference to God and religion, Amalek, their cruel enemy, at once appears to make their lives bitter and sorrowful.

There is often a deep meaning in a name. We read in the Bible that Moses changed the name

of Hoshea, his attendant, to Joshua. Hoshea means "help," while Joshua means "God's help."

Soon after the return of the spies, the necessity of ceremonials to convey to them certain divine truths was impressed upon the Israelites by the following lines: And the Lord said unto Moses: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they shall make themselves fringes (צִיצִית) on the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the fringe a thread of blue. And it shall be unto you a fringe that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them, and that you seek not after the inclinations of your own heart and the delight of your eyes, which usually lead you astray; that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God."

As human beings are more or less subject to the power of the senses, certain forms or ceremonies are necessary for the better understanding of the divine truths. But let us beware of worshiping the mere form, and ignoring the spirit which it represents.

VIII. THE REBELLION OF KORACH

We look in vain throughout history to find another man, who, in his great mission, had to encounter so many obstacles and attacks as did Moses. Scarcely was one disagreeable event over,

when a new one occurred. This time it was his cousin Korach, one of the tribe of Levi, who started a strong conspiracy against him. He was a disappointed man, and, being very rich, was striving for a position in which he could make his influence felt. He envied the ruling power of Moses and the priestly authority of Aaron.

He was what we would call a demagogue; he was trying to influence those people on whom his speeches would make the best impression. In every community there are discontented persons who are never satisfied with the condition of affairs, and who have always something to complain of. In Dathan, Abiram, and On, of the tribe of Reuben, he found men who were ready and willing to help carry out a bad and mischievous plan. He picked out these three men from the tribe of Reuben, thinking that this tribe, being first in birth and rank, must have felt keenly the humiliation of their position under the rule of members of the tribe of Levi. But to show that not merely the ordinary fault-finders, but also persons of the upper classes, were dissatisfied with the order of things, he succeeded in winning over to his side two hundred and fifty men, the princes of the community, who joined him in his conspiracy.

With these men Korach appeared before Moses and Aaron and said to them: "You take too much glory to yourselves, seeing that the whole congregation is holy and the Lord is among them; why then do you lift yourselves up above the congregation of the Lord?"

When Moses heard these words, he threw himself upon his face and said to Korach and his companions: "To-morrow the Lord will make known who is His and who is holy, that He may cause him to come near God." In the word "to-morrow" often lies concealed the fate of man. Moses continued: "You and your company shall take to-morrow your censers and shall put fire therein, and upon it put incense before the Lord; and it will be the man whom the Lord will choose that shall be the holy one."

Moses also tried another method of calming the dissatisfied men. He sent for Dathan and Abiram to discuss the matter with them in a peaceful manner; but both of them refused, saying, "We shall not come up to you." And adding reproach to refusal, they sent to him the following impertinent message: "Is it not enough that thou hast brought us up out of the land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that thou wilt try to make thyself also a prince over us?"

These bitter words grieved Moses very much, and to ease his heart he said: "O Lord, respect not their offerings. I have not taken away an ass, nor have I done wrong to any one of them." And God said: "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get you away from about the dwellings of Korach, Dathan, and Abiram.'" Thereupon they departed from the tents of these wicked men. But Dathan and Abiram came out haughtily, standing boldly at the door of their tents with their wives, their sons, and their little ones.

Then Moses said : " Through this ye shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these deeds and that I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die as all men die, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord causes the earth to open her mouth and to swallow them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then shall ye understand that these men have provoked the Lord." Scarcely had Moses spoken these words when the ground which was under them was rent asunder, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, with their houses and all the men that belonged to Korach. The earth closed over them and they disappeared from the midst of the congregation. Then all Israel that was round about them fled, for they said, " Perhaps the earth will swallow us also ! " Immediately a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that had offered the incense. But the sons of Korach, as we read later on (Numbers xxvi. 11), did not die, thus showing that the children were not punished for the sins of their parents.

Later on, in the times of David and Jehosaphat, the descendants of Korach were employed (I. Chronicles vi. 18; II. Chronicles xx. 19; Psalms xlii. 88) as singers in the Temple. On, the son of Peleth, one of the discontented men, of the tribe of Reuben, who at first joined in the conspiracy, withdrew later from it, and his life was saved. He had, it is told by our sages, a very sensible wife, who persuaded him to leave the conspirators. Such a wife deserves great praise.

Then the Lord said unto Moses: "Speak to Eliezar, the son of Aaron the priest, that he shall take the censers of those sinners out of the fire and shall make broad plates of them to cover the altar, for they have brought them near the Lord and they have thus become hallowed. They shall serve as a memorial for the Children of Israel." But on the following day, the congregation of the children of Israel murmured again against Moses and Aaron, saying, "It is you that have caused the people of the Lord to die." Then it came to pass that, when the congregation had assembled against Moses and Aaron, they looked toward the Tabernacle and beheld that the cloud was covering it.

And the glory of the Lord appeared to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Separate yourselves from the midst of this congregation that I may consume them in a moment." They then fell upon their faces and prayed. And Moses said to Aaron: "Take the censer and put fire from the altar therein, and put on the incense, and carry it quickly into the congregation and make an atonement for them; for a plague has broken out among the people." And Aaron did what Moses commanded him, and ran into the midst of the assembly, and, behold, the plague had already begun among the people. With his censer in his hand he made an atonement for the people, while standing between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.

Like Aaron, every priest and every man and woman should stand in the time of disease and

sickness at the couches of the sick, attend to the dead, and cheer and comfort the afflicted.

IX. AARON'S STAFF

We have seen that Moses at first met the conspiracy of Korach with calmness and dignity; later, however, when kindness failed, severer means were adopted to quell the rebellious spirit, and to maintain and uphold the moral authority of the great leader. In order, however, thoroughly to convince the people that the right man was in the right place, and that Aaron's appointment as High-priest was sanctioned by God, the Lord spoke to Moses: "Tell the children of Israel that they take one staff for each tribe, for all their princes, twelve staves in all; the name of each tribe shall be written upon its staff, and upon the staff of Levi shall be written the name of Aaron. And thou shalt lay them down in the Tabernacle of the congregation. It shall then come to pass that the staff of the man whom I have chosen, will blossom and I shall thus calm the murmurings of the children of Israel." And it came to pass that in the morning, as Moses went into the Tabernacle, the staff of Aaron had budded and had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. Moses showed it to all the children of Israel, and returned to each tribe its staff. But Aaron's staff was kept in the Tabernacle as a token.

We can derive a profitable lesson from this. Any duty we have to perform, or work we have to do, ought to be a sanctuary for us. If we enter this sanctuary with holy zeal and devotion for the accomplishment of the work which is intrusted to our hands, the labor that we perform will bring forth buds, blossoms, and sweet fruit. If, on the other hand, we enter the sanctuary in a lazy and indifferent spirit, the staff of our life's work will ever remain dry, not producing any fruit which can rejoice or benefit either ourselves or others.

X. GOD PUNISHES MOSES

In the fortieth year of their wanderings in the desert, the Israelites arrived again at Kadesh, from which place Moses had sent out the spies. The people again had no water to drink and commenced to quarrel with Moses and Aaron, saying: "Oh, that we had but perished when our brethren died before the Lord! Wherefore have you caused us to come out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? There is no place for pasture here, neither are there vines nor pomegranates, nor is there any water to drink."

Moses and Aaron then prayed to God and the Lord said unto Moses: "Take thy staff and gather the assembly together, thou and thy brother Aaron, and ye shall speak unto the rock before their eyes, that it shall give forth the waters and thou shalt bring forth for them water

out of the rock and give drink to the congregation and their cattle."

And Moses took the staff, as he was commanded to do, and assembled the congregation before the rock and said: "Hear now, ye rebels! Shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and with his staff smote the rock twice, and water came forth, and the congregation drank, and also their cattle. Then the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron: "Because you have not believed in Me, to sanctify Me before the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore, shall ye not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." These were the waters of "Meribah," where the children of Israel quarreled with the Lord and where He made His divine presence felt.

What were the offences of Moses and Aaron, that they were to be punished so severely? First, it was Moses's fault, for instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it twice, which was against God's command. Secondly, the higher our position is, the more we must try to address kindly those under our direction and guidance. This Moses did not do, for he called the people "rebels," which is not a fit expression for a leader, and especially on an occasion when men and cattle were almost dying of thirst. Thirdly, he did not show firm trust in the words of God, for in saying, "Shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" he showed his disbelief. Aaron on this occasion kept silent; perhaps on this account—for there are times when a man can do good

by speaking—he was punished so severely. After all, the sins of these two men were very small; however, God is very strict with those who are in His holy service, for He said, “By those who are near Me, I will be sanctified.”

Moses was resigned to his fate; he took the punishment of God with calmness and resignation. Unlike other men, who would grow weak and lax in their labors, now that they were punished, he made double efforts for the welfare of his people. He at once sent messengers from Kadesh to the King of Edom, asking him to allow the Israelites to pass through his country, promising him that they intended to go “by the king’s highway,” neither turning to the right nor to the left. But Edom refused to permit Israel to pass through his land and Israel turned away from him.

Why was it that the children of Israel paid such a tribute of high regard and consideration to Edom? Scripture does not conceal anything about the character of man; it pictures him truthfully, as we have just now seen about Moses. So it was with Esau, the ancestor of Edom. He was a worldly and material man without any high aims or ideas. However, he was an obedient and loving son, for whom the parental blessing was the choicest gift in the world. He had, after all, a warm and forgiving heart, and, although he once threatened to kill his brother Jacob, he soon forgot his ill-will. It is therefore noble and elevating to see how the memory of Esau was hallowed by the Israelites. This is the re-

ward of one who has honored his father and has extended the hand of forgiveness to an erring brother! Does this incident not show clearly how very true are the words of the Torah? "He renders mercy unto the thousandth generation!"

We learn a most useful lesson from the words of Moses to Edom: "Upon the royal high-road we shall go, neither to the right hand nor to the left." We must avoid extremes in life as much as we can. Extremes often make fanatics of us. The common-sense, middle way, far from the burning heat or the chilling cold, is the best road to travel in our career through life.

XI. DEATH OF MIRIAM AND AARON

Miriam died while the children of Israel were at Kadesh, and there she was buried. From that place they went to Mount Hor, near the borders of Edom. And the Lord said unto Moses: "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people. Take Aaron and Eliezar, his son, and cause them to go up unto Mount Hor. Tell Aaron to take off his garments and therewith clothe Eliezar, his son." Moses did as God commanded. Aaron died at the top of the Mount, and Moses and Eliezar came down from the Mount. When all the congregation saw that Aaron had departed, they wept for him for thirty days.

In speaking again of Aaron and Miriam, we must admit that both of them had done much to benefit their brethren in the desert, and that

they have left a name behind them which has not only been honored by past and present generations, but will be honored also in the future. Aaron was a model priest, of whom we must be proud. He possessed all the noble qualities needed to make a deep and favorable impression upon men. There was nothing of smallness or jealousy in him, for notwithstanding the fact that he was the elder brother, he freely submitted to the leadership of Moses. He assisted him greatly in his mission to Pharaoh, and it is indeed wonderful to see how united the brothers were in their difficult work, and with what devotion they bore their heavy burdens.

Aaron has been severely reproached for being the principal cause of the making of the golden calf. It is true he cannot be freed from this charge; but we must not forget that he was no ruler, and had not the power to keep in order a rough multitude. He was a kind-hearted man, yielding easily to the wishes of the people, hoping to gain his point by an abundance of kindness. This kindness was also the reason why he was not so strict with his own children, and that his two elder sons, Nadah and Abihu, followed their own ways. But he bore his affliction with great fortitude and composure when he heard of the sudden death of his sons.

His greatest aim in life was peace, and for the sake of this noble quality he made many sacrifices. It was Hillel who pointed out this great virtue in Aaron, when he said: "Be one of the disciples of Aaron; love peace, pursue

peace, love mankind and bring them nearer to the Torah." He never could see persons at enmity with one another. As soon as he heard that two people had become enemies, he tried his best to make them friends again. But he is dearest to us when he goes among the living and the dead, administering sweet comfort to the dying and sympathetic relief to the afflicted. The people felt his loss most keenly; and that the whole house of Israel, men, women, and children, were grieved and mourned his death for thirty days, shows us how truly he was beloved by all.

Similar to Aaron in many traits of character was his sister Miriam. We remember how in her childhood she watched her baby-brother Moses, when he was placed in that little basket upon the treacherous waters of the Nile. How many prayers did she offer then for the safety of the child! What joy she must have felt to have seen the child saved by the princess! How she hastened to her, asking in that innocent way, "Shall I go and fetch one of the Hebrew mothers to nurse the child?"

Later on, we see her after the passage through the Red Sea, on that glorious morning, when, with song and music, she, with other women, tried to raise the spirits of the multitude and to inspire the weary and faint-hearted with new courage and new hope for the future.

She was much beloved by the people in the desert, to whom she was, in case of need, a real helper and consoler. They believed that as long as she stayed among them, no drought would

occur in the wilderness. And hardly had she departed, when they believed that all the fountains of the desert had dried up. She was a source of comfort, raising the low-spirited from their despair, and cheering the hopeless and down-cast.

XII. THE BRAZEN SERPENT

When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, dwelling in the south, heard that the Israelites were coming, he attacked them and took some of them prisoners. Upon this, Israel vowed to God: "If Thou wilt deliver these people into my hand, then will I devote their cities to Thee." And the Lord hearkened to Israel and delivered up to them the Canaanites, whose cities they devoted to the Lord. They called the name of the place "Chormah."

After this, when they set forward from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea, to go round the land of Edom, the people became impatient. They thereupon spoke against God and Moses, saying: "Wherefore have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, for there is no bread and no water?" And the Lord let loose poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit them, so that many died. The people then came to Moses and said: "We have sinned and spoken against the Lord and against thee; pray unto the Lord that He take the serpents away from us." And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses: "Make unto thy-

self a serpent and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that whoever is bitten shall look at it and live." Then Moses made a serpent of copper and put it on a pole, and whenever a serpent had bitten a man and he looked up to the serpent of copper, he did not die. Looking up to the serpent was to teach the Israelites to lift up their heads to the heights above, where God is dwelling, and to confide in Him.

Again continuing their journey, the Israelites sent messengers to Sichon, the king of the Amorites, saying: "Let us pass through the land; we will not turn aside into the field or vineyard; we will not drink the water of a well, but by the king's highway we will go along until we have passed thy border." But Sichon would not let them pass through his land; he assembled all his people and fought with Israel. However, Israel vanquished him with the edge of the sword, took possession of his land, and conquered all his cities and dwelt in them.

Then they turned and went up to Bashan. Og, the king thereof, went out against them, he and all his people, and fought the battle of Edrel. The Israelites conquered him also, and all his people, and took possession of his land. According to Deuteronomy (iii. 11), this king was a descendant of the giants, called Raphaim. His bedstead was of iron, nine cubits long and four cubits wide. After these victories, the Israelites went forward and encamped in the plains of Moab, on the side of the Jordan opposite to Jericho.

XIII. CURSES TURNED TO BLESSINGS

When Balak, the king of Moab, heard that the Israelites had conquered the two kings, Sichon and Og, he was very much afraid, and as he had not the courage to meet them in open battle, he made up his mind to injure or destroy them, according to a heathen belief, by having them cursed. If it is a shameful act to curse an individual, how much more infamous must it be to curse a whole nation for no cause at all?

For the purpose of carrying out this plan, the Moabitish king sent messengers with presents to Balaam, who was known far and wide for doing such unworthy deeds. This man, Balaam, being a sorcerer and prophet among the heathens, prided himself upon having divine inspiration during the hours of the night. His character was of the lowest and meanest. He was a double-faced man, who spoke not what he really felt, and who had such a love for money, fame, and flattery that he would do almost anything in order to obtain them.

When the messengers came to him with the presents, he did not refuse their request, although he well knew that God would not consent to such a mischievous act; but the sight of the presents stifled every good feeling in him. He invited the messengers to stay with him over night, as the Lord would tell him what to do. But as the Lord's answer was in the negative, he

told his guests on the following day that God had refused to let him go with them. The messengers then departed and reported to Balak the result of their mission.

The king thereupon sent messengers of higher rank, providing them with better and more precious gifts. They begged Balaam once more to come and to carry out their king's wish and desire. When they thus appeared before him, he replied to them, saying, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not transgress the order of the Lord, my God." But how little his heart felt what he said, and how undecided he was in his actions, the words which he immediately afterward addressed to his visitors tell us: "Tarry ye here likewise this night, in order that I may know what the Lord will say to me." But on that very night the Lord appeared to him again, saying: "You may go with these men, but the words which I shall speak unto thee shalt thou say."

Knowing this, he need not have gone at all, for the Lord by no means would permit him to say anything against His people; but his vanity and love of gold prevented him from acting on his own account in the way that God desired. He rose in the morning, saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. The Lord, although He had given him permission, was angry about his going, knowing too well what were the real sentiments that moved Balaam, and on which side were his sympathies.

When Balak heard that Balaam had arrived,

he went to meet him and heartily welcomed him. But Balaam was very much confused. Knowing that his mission would not be successful, yet he felt ashamed to acknowledge his failure. He declared to Balak that he had come in response to his invitation, but that he could only say what the Lord would put in his mouth. Balak then took him upon the height of Baal, where he could overlook a portion of the people of Israel. Compelled by God to speak only good of the Israelites, Balaam said :

“How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?
And how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath
not defied?

It is a people that shall dwell alone,
And among the nations it shall not be reck-
oned.

“Who can count the dust of Jacob,
And number the fourth part of Israel?
May my soul die the death of the righteous,
And may my end be like his.”

Balak then reproached Balaam for speaking in that way, but received the answer that he could not do otherwise. Then the king took him up the heights of Pisgah, thinking that a change of view would bring a change of feeling. Arriving there, Balaam, carried away by enthusiasm, began again, saying :

“Rise up, Balak, and hear,
Bend thine ear unto me, son of Zippor!
God is not a man that He should lie,

Nor a son of man that he should repent.
Behold to bless I have received the word,
And He hath blessed and I cannot change it.

“There is no wrong in Jacob,
Nor any corruption in Israel.”

Balak, thoroughly discouraged by this second blessing, requested Balaam not to bless, if he could not curse, the Israelites. Then he conducted him up the heights of Baal Peor, a heathen place of worship. Arriving there and seeing from a distance how peacefully Israel was encamped according to its tribes, Balaam spoke forth the following beautiful words :

“How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob,
Thy dwellings, O Israel!
As streams are they spread forth,
As gardens by the riverside,
As aloe-trees which the Lord hath planted,
As cedar-trees beside the water.
They that bless thee shall be blessed,
And they that curse thee shall be cursed.”

And in spite of Balak's great anger and indignation, Balaam did not end his speech here; but lifting up his voice again, he foretold the future of Israel in these words :

“There steppeth forth a star out of Jacob,
And there riseth a scepter out of Israel.”

Whether by these words, star or scepter, is meant King David, who conquered the Moabites and Edomites, we cannot say; but there is much reason to believe that it is so (II Samuel viii. 2).

XIV. ZELOPCHAD'S DAUGHTERS

About this time the five daughters of Zelopchad appeared before Moses and Eliezar, requesting that the inheritance of their father, who died without leaving any sons, might be given to them, since there were no male heirs. They made their request thus: "Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not among the company of those that banded themselves together against the Lord in the conspiracy of Korach, but he died by his own sins and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be taken away from his family, even though he hath no son? Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father."

These women, who spoke thus in defense of their rights, were noble and worthy representatives of their sex. Their speech was found to be pleasant in the eyes of God, for He approved their appeal by saying, "The daughters of Zelopchad have spoken well." These five sisters certainly had the right soul and spirit, for the words they used for this purpose—"Why should the name of our father be taken from our family?"—have a great ethical meaning and importance. By these words they lovingly assert the good name of their father, they free him from guilt and transgression, and defend him from the reproach that he had acted against the public welfare. Children who thus speak of their father, live in his spirit, act in his way, revere his memory, and never forget their

parental benefactor. The daughter's wishes were granted and they received the possessions of their father.

Soon after this incident, God told Moses to ascend Mount Abarim for the purpose of seeing from the top of the mountain the land which He had promised to give Israel, but which Moses was not permitted to enter. Although Moses received this message with calmness of soul, yet his heart must have been grieved. Thinking of the daughters of Zelopchad, who had succeeded in keeping the name and memory of their father, it was only natural for the great lawgiver to think that one of his own children should succeed him and perpetuate his noble work. How sorely grieved and how keenly disappointed he must have felt when he found that neither one of them was worthy or able to succeed him! How many other fathers have had similar sad experiences, and have felt the same bitter disappointment in their children!

Moses, however, had the interest of his people at heart more than his own, and, knowing how soon the time must come when he would have to part from them, he appealed to God to select at once an able successor: "Let the Lord, the God of the spirit of all flesh, appoint a man for the congregation, who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like a flock that has no shepherd."

The Lord then told him that he might select Joshua, the son of Nun, his faithful servant, for

this high and sacred office. Moses did as the Lord commanded him; he laid his hands upon the head of his friend and pupil and blessed him. In order to obtain for his appointment the approval of all Israel, Joshua was raised to his new dignity before the eyes of the whole community by Eliezar the High-priest. There was no better man for such a great and commanding position than the brave, truthful, and valiant Joshua. He was the right man in the right place.

XV. SEPARATION OF THE TRIBES

Soon afterward the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh appeared before Moses, requesting him to give them for an inheritance the land of Yazer and of Gilead, which had been taken away from Sichon and Og, the two conquered kings. They emphasized their request by saying that they had much cattle, for which there was plenty of grass and rich pasture in the lands which they desired.

Moses listened with anger to their appeal, and harshly answered them, "Shall your brethren go to war across the Jordan and you stay here?" To this bitter reproach they replied that: "We all shall go armed with the children of Israel and not return to our houses until we have assisted in conquering the Promised Land and have seen that every one has received his inheritance." After hearing this, Moses granted their request, adding at the same time that in doing as they promised,

they would show themselves "guiltless in the eyes of God and man." What a beautiful thought, to be always "guiltless in the eyes of God and man"! These tribes later on considerably weakened the national ties: They did not come so often in close contact with those who three times a year went to Jerusalem to worship in the Sanctuary.

When the representatives of the two and a half tribes appeared before Moses, they said: "We shall build sheepfolds for our cattle, and cities for our little ones." In this sentence, cattle and sheepfolds are mentioned first, and then the children. Is not this the usual course in this world? The entire interest of the tribes was centered in their cattle, which received their first attention, and the interest or concern they manifested for their children came afterward.

One of the last measures which Moses, by order of God, commanded the Israelites to do was that six places of refuge should be established, three on each side of the Jordan. These cities, mostly inhabited by the Levites, were called cities of refuge for those who, without any intent, had caused the death of a neighbor. Such a measure was very humane, as it curbed the spirit of revenge so prevalent among all ancient nations. The refugees had to stay in these cities until the death of the High-priest, when they were permitted to go elsewhere.

XVI. THE DESERT CAMPS

Moses, by command of God, recorded the various camps of the Israelites from the time of their going out from Egypt until they came to the borders of Canaan—the forty years of their wandering in the desert. With an uplifted hand—that is, with joy, hope, and courage—they had left Egypt, but after having encamped forty-two times, alas! the old fathers had nearly all died, and the Promised Land was to be given to the rising generation, the children born in the desert.

These camps give us a real picture of human life. Our whole existence on earth is a continual going and coming, a constant journey from one place to another. Indeed, when the forty years have passed away, what great changes have taken place? These changes often make the most cheerful heart sad and thoughtful. Many beloved persons have been called away from earth during this period; intimate friends, to whom we were attached, have gone forever, and people once rich have become poor, and others who began with little have become prosperous. If people would remember how frail is human life, and how the man of “to-day” is perhaps no more among the living of “to-morrow,” they might act with better and kindlier feelings toward each other.

During the long journey of our forefathers in the desert, they were constantly in a state of excitement and agitation, and found fault with

nearly everything that was done for them. Now they were sick of the bread they ate; again, they did not find the water to their taste; then, in a moment of despair, they remembered the flesh-pots of Egypt. When one would think they were accustomed to the life in the desert and should have borne patiently the unavoidable privations they had to endure, then their easily excited natures were upset by some unexpected turn of affairs, as by the evil reports of the spies, by the rebellion of Korach, and by the wicked association of the Midianites.

As life is uncertain, let us make the best use of the time that is allotted to us. Therefore, whether we are sitting quietly in our homes, or are journeying about from place to place or from land to land, as our forefathers did, let us ever have trust in God, who will never forsake us, but will maintain and uphold us. As happiness cannot be measured, so as to discover who has more and who has less of it, let us be contented with what we have and with what we are able to call our own. For happy is he who is satisfied with that which God has given him; happy is he who works dutifully within his sphere as God has desired him to work; happy is he who with a healthy body and cheerful spirit spreads peace and good-will, light and kindness, among all with whom he comes in contact.

XVII. DEUTERONOMY

With the building of the cities of refuge, Moses closed his noble career as leader and lawgiver of Israel. When he felt his life drawing to a close, he used the hours still allotted to him to address his people in kindness and love. Like a father who parts from his beloved children, or like a teacher who bids farewell to his dear pupils, he tried once more to impress upon Israel all those wise laws and beautiful lessons which he considered so necessary for their welfare and well-being. He was like a devoted parent, who, nearing his end, and knowing that he was to leave behind him an untrained and untutored son, strove to urge upon him with all the energy of his soul to remain faithful to the words he had taught him during his lifetime. "What will become of that unstable and wavering nation when I am no longer among them? Who will be able to lead and direct them when I have parted from them forever?" Such thoughts are naturally suggested by Moses's words (Deuteronomy xxxi. 27): "I know thy rebellion and thy obstinacy; for, behold, while I have been yet alive with thee, hast thou been rebellious against the Lord, and how much more so wilt thou be after my death?"

Despite these sad thoughts, he had the firm belief that the great work which he had begun could not be destroyed, but would live forever. This glad hope has become realized. Israel will

live. The great tree which Moses planted will ever root deeper; it will grow more and more, and will be ever fruitful.

Moses's admonitions to his people before his death are contained in the Fifth Book of Moses, Deuteronomy (Debarim); they are all elevating and beautiful and speak to the heart. We shall only select a few, chiefly those which refer to our relation to God and to our conduct toward man.

XVIII. MORAL LAWS

I. KNOWING AND ADORING GOD

"Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the One Eternal Being. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hands and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thy house" (Deuteronomy vi. 4—9).

In order to remember God in thought and deed (head and hand), every male in Israel over thirteen years of age had to lay "Tephilin" (phylac-

teries). The Tephilin contain the four Biblical sections :

1. Israel's liberation from Egypt through God (Exodus xiii. 1—10).

2. Israel's selection (Exodus xiii. 11—16).

3. The knowledge of God and the obligation to serve Him (Deuteronomy vi. 4—9).

4. God's reward and punishment (Deuteronomy xi. 13—21).

The "Mezuza," which likewise contains some Biblical sentences, should be fastened on the door-posts of our houses.

II. HUMILITY

"Take heed that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and his statutes, which I command thee this day. That when thou hast eaten and art satisfied and hast built goodly houses and hast dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply and thy silver and gold are multiplied and all that thou hast is multiplied, thy heart be then not proud and thou forgettest not the Lord thy God, and speakest not in thy heart: My power and the strength of my hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy viii. 11—17).

As it was in the olden times, so it is in the present. Among successful people, "pride and forgetfulness," those twin companions of prosperity, are often marked traits. The words of Moses, "And when Jeshurun became fat, he rebelled," can well be applied in our day to many people of fortune.

III. FEAR OF GOD AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

"And now, O Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, to Love Him and serve Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul! To keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy own good! To the Lord thy God belong the heaven of heavens and the earth, with all that is therein. Yet only thy fathers did the Lord delight to love; therefore, He chose you after them, from all the nations. Remove, therefore, the evil of your heart and be stiff-necked no more. For the Lord your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty and the powerful, who has no regard for persons and taketh no bribes; who executeth justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loveth the stranger, to give him food and garment. Love ye also the stranger, for ye yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy x. 10—19).

How humane and kind is the law about the stranger! If you compare the harsh measures which the ancient Greeks and Romans adopted against the stranger, with the humane laws of the Bible, you will readily see what a sublime and holy book it is. It was the first chapter of liberty and equality given to the world.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was partly caused by the unkindness and inhospitality of its inhabitants toward strangers, and in the

Biblical chapter, previous to the one which tells of the awful fate of Sodom, the great hospitality and friendly spirit of Abraham are mentioned by way of contrast.

XIX. MORAL LAWS (*Continued*)

IV. AIDING THE NEEDY

“If there be among you a needy man, any one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother. But thou shalt open wide thy hand and thou shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, which his want requireth. Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, for because of this thing the Lord thy God will bless thee in all thy work and in all the possessions of thy hand.” (Deuteronomy xv. 7—11).

The Hebrew word *תָּתַן* (to give), read from either end, shows that whatever we give will be returned to us, either by the way of the joy we feel in doing good, or by the results we gain in having helped in a charitable work. It is King Solomon, who, in this very spirit, so truly says: “Throw thy bread upon the water, for I am certain that after many days thou wilt find it again.”

Mar Akba, the Benevolent Man

Mar Akba, a wise, famous, and wealthy man, applied his wealth not only to the support of his own house and relatives, but also aided the

poor and needy. Most of those who were supported by him never knew the name of their kind benefactor, because he did not want to make them ashamed before him. He himself went disguised into the huts of poverty and distributed alms. He doubled his gifts on holidays in order to give additional joy to those whom he aided.

Once he sent the sum of four hundred florins by his son to a poor man, the day before a festival. The son soon returned and said to his father: "I am convinced that the man to whom you sent me does not deserve thy gift." "Why dost thou think so?" the father asked. "I found that the man had visitors, to whom he served old wine." "And you think that I should not have given him the money?" "Of course not," the son replied; "a man who receives visitors and gives them old wine, is not in need of support."

"You are mistaken," the father replied. "I know this man well; at one time he was rich and prosperous, but through misfortune he lost all his property. In his better days he gave generously to the poor. He is accustomed to give, and does so even in his unfortunate position. Go, my son, bring him another four hundred florins; he will from this day on receive a double sum."

V. THE POWER OF JUSTICE

"Judges and officers shalt thou appoint unto thyself in all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy land, and they shall

judge the people with justice. They shall not render wrong judgment; they shall not respect persons, and they shall not take bribes, for a bribe blindeth the eyes of the wise, and turns to naught the words of the righteous. Justice, only justice, shalt thou pursue in order that thou mayest live and retain possession of the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy xvi. 18—20).

Justice stands higher than love. Love makes us partial to the persons we cherish and respect, but not so justice.

The ancient Greeks represented Justice as a blind-folded woman holding in her hand an evenly-balanced scales, and who thus weighed out impartial justice to all.

XX. MORAL LAWS (*Continued*)

VI. THE NEIGHBOR'S POSSESSION

"Thou shalt not remove the landmark of thy neighbor, which they of olden times have set in thy inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy xix. 14).

We should not enrich ourselves by taking land which, though near us, belongs to our neighbor. In giving this law a wider meaning, we find that we are strictly forbidden to trespass on the rights of our fellow-man. We must neither by persuasion nor by false statements draw away custom

or trade from our neighbor, nor must we try to injure him in the eyes of his commercial friends or in the eyes of the public, by false reports.

VII. GOOD-FELLOWSHIP

"Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and withdraw thyself from them; thou shalt surely bring them back again unto thy brother. But if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or thou know him not, then shalt thou take it unto thine own house, and it shall remain with thee until thy brother seek after it, and then shalt thou restore it to him. Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fallen by the way and withhold thine aid from them; thou shalt surely help them" (Deuteronomy xxii. 1-4).

Closely connected with this law is that beautiful sentence in Exodus, chapter xxiii. verse 4: "If thou seest the ox or the ass of thine enemy going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him."

It is unreasonable that we should love our enemy; it is contrary to human nature. But nevertheless it is only proper and commendable not to do him any harm, and to treat him in a generous and honorable manner.

VIII. KINDNESS TOWARD ANIMALS

"If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or with eggs, and the mother is sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt

not take the mother with the young. But thou shalt surely let the mother go, and the young thou mayest take to thyself; in order that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live many days" (Deuteronomy xxii. 6—7).

In order not to break a mother's heart, even if it be only that of a bird, we are commanded to drive the mother bird far away from the nest before we take the young ones. For she would grieve should she see her young taken away from her. If God has commanded us not to hurt the feelings of even a bird, how much more ought we to avoid hurting the feelings of our fellow-men?

The words "that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long" show us how animals are considered as creatures of God, and how well they should be treated by man. Man shall be master over the dumb animals, but he shall by no means be their tormentor. The dangerous ones he may destroy, but to kill the harmless ones or to vex or hurt any animal is cruel and forbidden.

IX. LAWS OF HUMANITY

"Thou shalt not withhold the wages of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren or a stranger that is in the land within thy gates. On the same day shalt thou give him his wages, that the sun may not go down upon it; for he is poor and his soul longeth for it; so that he may not cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin in thee. Fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the

children be put to death for the fathers; for every man should suffer for his own sin. Thou shalt not pervert the cause of the stranger nor of the fatherless, nor take in pledge the raiment of a widow" (Deuteronomy xxiv. 14—12).

Eliesor of Bartota, the Orphan's Friend

That sympathy and benevolence are to be shown toward widows and orphans is often mentioned in the Bible. The Talmud tells us of a certain Eliesor of Bartota, who was very kind toward the poor and orphans. Every case of need touched his gentle heart, so that he gave away almost everything he had. Being aware of his generosity, those who usually collected alms for the poor no longer called on him, and even tried to avoid meeting him in the street. Once the collectors met him by chance, and, as they did not think it proper to turn away from him, he stopped them and asked them what they were doing. "We are collecting a dowry for a poor orphan girl," they replied. "Well," said Eliesor, "it is well that I have met you, for I was on my way to buy an outfit and other necessary articles for my daughter, who is going to be married. However, an orphan girl has preference over her; here is all my money, you must take it from me."

XXI. MORAL LAWS—*Continued*

X. HONEST WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

"Thou shalt not have in thy house different weights, a great and a small. A perfect and just weight shalt thou have, in order that thy days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy xxv. 14—15).

Abba Saul ben Botnit

Abba Saul ben Botnit lived in the century before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was a great scholar, and was a wine merchant by vocation. He was so very conscientious in his business and so upright in his dealings that by saving the drops which fell when he poured out the wine, he collected three hundred measures which he presented to the Temple authorities in Jerusalem. His great honesty became so well known that on his death-bed he could raise his hand toward heaven and truly say, "My hand always gave just measures."

Rabbi Pinchas ben Jair

Rabbi Pinchas was the son-in-law of the famous and eminent scholar Simon ben Jochai. Besides his great knowledge, he was known for his strict honesty. One day two men gave him two measures of barley to keep for them, and, as they did not return, he made up his mind to sow this barley in one of his fields.

He continued this for seven years and reaped a large harvest every year. After seven years the two men returned and asked him for their barley. He went with them to one of his storehouses, opened a large room, and, pointing to the barley which was there, said, "All this belongs to you." What a noble and trustworthy man he must have been !.

Let us now continue with our history. The copy of the sacred law was placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy xxxi. 26). This copy was kept until the time of King Josiah (647—616 B.C.E.), who, having a presentiment of the future dispersion of Israel, hid it in a subterranean wall in the Temple.

Moses composed a beautiful and heart-stirring farewell song, which might well serve as a warning and consolation to all generations. He himself delivered it before the children of Israel. This song commences with the words :

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
My language shall drop like the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew,
As heavy rains upon the grass,
As showers upon the herbs !
The name of the Lord will I proclaim,
The greatness of our God will I describe !
He is our Rock, His word is perfect,
For all His words are just.
He is the God of truth and without iniquity,
Just and upright is He."

When he finished this song, he implored the Israelites once more to remain true and faithful to the precepts he had taught them: "Set your hearts unto all the words which I lay before you this day, so that ye may command them to your children to do, all the words of this law. For it is not vain and useless for you to keep my commandments; on the contrary, it is your life, and through these words shall you live many days in the land which you go over the Jordan to possess."

Then God commanded Moses to ascend Mount Abrim (Nebo), from which he might view once more the Promised Land. He then requested all the tribes of Israel to gather before him for the last time, and, as a dying father, he pronounced his blessing over them. Before he stretched out his hands to bless them, however, he reminded them once more of the duty of Israel, "The law which Moses commanded is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob."

XXII. THE DEATH OF MOSES

It is often with great men as it is with parents. They are given much anxiety and trouble during their stay on earth, and many hours of bitterness and sorrow might have been spared them, if those whom they have benefited had acted more kindly and affectionately toward them. As soon, however, as the beloved ones part from us, we mourn and lament our loss, as if that could atone for

our errors and lighten our grief. How different and how much better it would have been had we cherished and honored and dealt gently with our beloved ones during their lifetime! Then, at the hour of their departure from this world, we could have said: "There is one consolation for us in this hour of gloom and depression: we have always acted dutifully, lovingly, and nobly toward those whom the Lord has taken from our midst!"

These are the thoughts that enter our minds when we reflect on Moses's departure from this world. There is nothing more pathetic and touching than the way in which the great man parted from his nation. When great men die, they often leave behind them some valuable gifts to worthy persons, and costly presents to others; and sometimes they generously bequeath a considerable part of their fortune to their children and their kindred, as well as to charitable institutions.

Moses, however, had collected no treasures. He could, therefore, leave neither gifts nor money to any one, not even to his children. But what he left behind him was more valuable than all the treasures of the world. What this was is stated in the last chapter of the Torah, and commences with these beautiful words: "And this is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death." Indeed, it was nothing but a blessing (בְּרָכָה *berochah*) which Moses left when he departed from his brethren; it was the blessing of the Torah which he left behind him, saying: "My brethren, you will always rise, prosper, and succeed in life if

you keep those laws which the Lord has given for your practice and observance."

Thus he finished his farewell words, and, casting a parting glance upon his beloved people, hastened his steps, and left them, never again to return. Then, solitary and alone, without any human being at his side, he ascended Mount Nebo. Taking a last look at the blessed Land of Promise, which was to be conquered by the Israelites, he silently withdrew from the scenes of this earthly life, and hopefully entered that unknown land of bliss, where so many before him had found their resting-place.

It is quite strange and gives us occasion for thought, that not one of his sons, neither Gershom nor Eliezer, followed or accompanied him on his final journey. It may have been due to the fact that his sons were not men after his own heart. Perhaps they favored their mother, Zipporah, whose religious views differed from those of Moses; it is, indeed, not uncommon that children, brought up by parents of different religions, neither cling to one nor the other.

It is also possible that Moses's death and the spot where he was buried were purposely concealed from the multitude, so as to avoid sepulcher-worship in future at his tomb. Moses was enough in himself; he did not want his brethren to make a god of him, nor to give him later on any divine or superhuman qualities. The nation he molded and created, the word of God which he taught, and the religion which he gave to our people, are the best possible proclaimers of his

immortal name. Every one of us has set up in his heart a monument to him, not built of marble or stone, but of deep love, which will last until distant ages and generations, until the last Jew has disappeared from this globe.

When Moses's death was made known to the people (he died on his birthday, the seventh day of Adar), they wept bitterly. They mourned for him thirty days. Now they saw how wrongly and ungratefully they had acted toward the man, who had only their welfare and happiness at heart. For his people he renounced royal pomp and luxury; for his people he willingly went into exile; for his people he became a poor shepherd for more than forty years; for his people he readily offered to give up his life; for his people he was not allowed to enter the blessed land; aye, for his people he ascended Mount Nebo, solitary and alone, that he might rest there after all the troubles and bitter experiences of his life.

Such a man and such a champion for the cause of God, of Israel, and of mankind will never rise again. His memory, however, will always be hallowed; his great work will ever remain a treasure and divine blessing for young and old.

XXIII. JOSHUA, THE LEADER

After the death of Moses, God said to Joshua, the son of Nun: "Moses, My servant, is dead; therefore, arise and take the children of Israel over the Jordan. As I was with Moses, so will

I be with thee. Only be thou strong and very courageous, and be careful to do all that which is written in the Book of the Law. This book shall not depart out of thy mouth; thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe everything that is written therein." Joshua then spoke to the officers of the people, and commanded them: "Go through the camps and tell the people: 'Prepare ye to pass over the Jordan within three days, in order to conquer the land which the Eternal had promised to your fathers.'"

To the sons of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said: "Remember what Moses, the servant of God, had commanded you. You may leave your wives, children, and herds in the lands on this side of the Jordan, but you shall pass over armed before your brethren, all your mighty men of valor, and help them until the Lord has granted your brethren rest; then you may return to the lands of your possession and inhabit them." Hereupon they answered him, saying: "Wheresoever thou wilt send us, we shall go; in the way that we have obeyed Moses, so we shall obey thee."

Then Joshua sent two men as spies to Jericho. They arrived in the city, which was strongly fortified, and went into the house of a woman named Rahab, to lodge there. Some one told the King of Jericho that two spies of Israel had come into the city and were staying at Rahab's house. He immediately sent officers to Rahab, telling her to bring out the two men at once, as

they had come into the city to spy out the land. Rahab, however, had taken the men upon the roof of her house and had hidden them under some stalks of flax which were spread out to dry there. When the king's messengers came to search the house, she said: "It is true, two strange men entered my house yesterday; but, last night, before the gates of the city were closed, they departed again, and I know not where they have gone. If you pursue them quickly, perhaps you may find them on the road." And the messengers did as Rahab had advised.

Scarcely had they left, when Rahab went up to the roof and talked with the men. She said to them: "I know that the Eternal has given you this land, for we are all stricken with fear, and the inhabitants around us have become faint-hearted, because of you. When we heard what the Lord your God has done for you, our hearts melted, and we became discouraged for fear of you; for we saw that the Lord your God is alone the God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Swear to me by the Lord, as I have shown you kindness, that you will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a sure token that you will preserve the house of my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." Whereupon the men granted her request, provided she would not reveal to any one their stay with her and the promise they made to her. "On our return," they continued, "we shall show thee kindness and truth."

She then let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was upon the town-wall. Before they departed, they told her to fasten a scarlet thread in the window of the house, in order that they might notice it when they returned with their brethren to take the city. After the spies left the house, they went into the mountains and remained there for three days, while their pursuers were looking for them on the road. Then they descended the mountain, passed over the Jordan, and came again to Joshua, to whom they related all that had befallen them. Unlike the other spies, who had been sent by Moses, and who had discouraged the people, they raised the spirits of the Israelites, and exclaimed cheerfully: "Truly, the Lord has given all the country into our hands; for all the inhabitants thereof are already faint-hearted and discouraged."

People sometimes complain that there is so little gratitude in the world. Even if our heart does not make us show our thankfulness, our reason ought not let us forget any kindness done to us. Often, instead of acknowledging favors thankfully, we make light of them, and try to persuade ourselves that even without the favors we might have succeeded just as well. It was, therefore, a most prudent step for Rahab to bind the spies, by oath, to their promise, which they conscientiously kept. Should we, like Rahab, compel people to acknowledge a kindness? No; forced gratitude is not true gratitude.

XXIV. CROSSING THE JORDAN

Joshua and all the people rose early in the morning and came to the banks of the river; there they stayed three days. On the third day Joshua said unto them: "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do miracles among you." On the following day they broke camp to pass over the Jordan. The priests, who carried the Ark, walked in front of the people.

Then God said unto Joshua: "This day will I begin to make thee great in the eyes of all Israel, so that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee. Thou shalt command the priests, who carry the Ark of the Covenant, saying: 'When ye come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, ye shall stand still. The waters of the Jordan shall then be divided, as soon as the feet of the priests shall touch them, so that the Israelites may pass through the Jordan in the same manner as once they did the Red Sea.'" Joshua spoke these words to the people, saying, "By this token ye shall see that there is a living God among you."

The Jordan was at its flood; the waters overflowed the banks, for it was harvest time. When the priests, carrying the holy Ark, came to the river and touched it with their feet, the waters were parted before them, and they walked on dry ground into the middle of the river. There the priests stood with the Ark and waited, while

all the children of Israel passed over to the other side into the land of Canaan.

At the place where the priests were standing, Joshua ordered twelve stones to be set up as a memorial. Also twelve other stones, taken up from the Jordan, he commanded to be carried with them, to be put up as a monument in Gilgal, where they pitched their camp that night.

On the tenth of the first month (Nissan), the children of Israel passed over the Jordan and entered the land which God had promised to Abraham. The sons of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (40,000 men) went armed before the whole army as the advance guard. On the fourteenth day of the month, toward the evening, the people offered up the paschal lamb. On the following day they ate of the fruit of the land—unleavened bread and parched corn. From that day on they ceased to eat manna.

XXV. THE FALL OF JERICHO AND AI

Jericho, the City of Palms, being a strong fortress, was closely shut on account of the children of Israel. No one went out and no one came in. But the Lord promised Joshua the victory over the King of Jericho, and gave him the needed directions for taking the city. Once each day, for six days, the army marched silently around the city. The priests accompanied it with the Ark. On the seventh day, at dawn, they marched around the city six times, and when

they were marching the seventh time the priests sounded the big trumpets, at the sound of which the people raised such a tremendous shout that the walls immediately tumbled down, and the men, passing over the ruins, rushed quickly into the city.

Joshua had issued an order that every living thing found in the city was to be destroyed. Only the house of Rahab, with her father and mother, brothers and sisters and relatives, was to be saved, thus showing that an oath was a holy matter with the Israelites. The city, however, was to be burnt, and all that was therein; only the silver and the gold, the vessels of copper and iron, were to be put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.

As Jericho was the first city which was conquered, it was devoted entirely to the Lord. That so many human beings fell by the sword is to be regretted, but such is the fate of war. In ancient, as well as in modern wars, the laws of humanity were more or less disregarded.

The children of Israel were very careful not to take any of the treasures that were devoted to the Lord. But one man from the tribe of Judah, Achan by name, took some of these articles for himself, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against all the children of Israel for permitting him to do it.

Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, on the east side of Bethel, for the purpose of spying out the country. When they returned to camp again, they brought word that it was not necessary to

send a large number of men for the conquest of Ai, as three thousand soldiers were able to take the place. Joshua sent three thousand men, but they were unsuccessful in their fight. The inhabitants of Ai killed thirty-six of them and routed the others. On account of this defeat the hearts of the people became faint.

Joshua, being much grieved, fell on his face before the Ark of the Lord, and said: "Alas, O Lord! wherefore hast Thou caused these people to pass over the Jordan, to deliver them into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? What shall I say, O Lord, since Israel has turned his back before his enemies?" But the Lord said to Joshua: "Wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel has sinned; he has taken of the devoted things; he has stolen and has hidden the booty secretly. Israel will not be able to stand before his enemies; I cannot be with him as long as he keeps these things in his possession. Make a search to-morrow morning, and let every tribe pass in review before thee, and it shall be that he who is seized with the accursed things shall be put to death, because he has transgressed the Covenant of the Lord and has wrought wickedness in Israel."

Joshua rose up early in the morning and ordered each tribe to pass before him. While doing this, the tribe of Judah was suddenly commanded to halt. From the ranks Achan was taken and Joshua, addressing him, said: "My son, I pray thee, give honor to the Lord God of Israel, and make a confession to Him and tell me what thou

hast done; hide nothing from me." Then Achan answered Joshua and said: "Truly, I have indeed sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, for I have stolen of the devoted things." Then Joshua said, "Thou must die, as thou hast brought misfortune upon Israel." And he was put to death, and over him was raised a great heap of stones. The name of the place was called the valley of Achor (trouble).

Although Achan had confessed his guilt at once, and by his confession, perhaps, deserved a milder punishment, still in having offended the holiness of God by his sin, the punishment meted out to him was necessary. The young army had just entered the land of Palestine to conquer it, and any laxity in the strict moral discipline demanded of the soldiers, might have wrecked the military spirit of the whole body.

After this, Joshua advanced at the head of his army toward the city of Ai, and captured it by strategy. He took about five thousand men, and put them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai, while the people encamped on the north side of the city.

When the King of Ai saw the camp he went out to battle against Israel, he and all his people; but he did not know that there were men in ambush in the rear of the city. Then Joshua made believe he was beaten and was fleeing into the wilderness. The king and all the soldiers and inhabitants pursued the fugitives, but scarcely had they left the city, when the men in ambush quickly entered it and set it on fire. When the

people of Ai turned and saw the smoke over the city, they saw that they were caught in an ambush, for now Joshua and his men had turned on them. Being completely hemmed in by the Israelites, they were all killed.

Then Joshua built an altar of stones unto the Lord, on Mount Ebal. And he wrote upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, in the presence of the children of Israel.

XXVI. THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

When the kings living in Canaan heard how successful Joshua had been in his attack upon Jericho and Ai, they united against him. But the inhabitants of the free state of Gibeon acted very shrewdly and cunningly toward Joshua. They feared to fight with him, for they were disheartened by the terrible defeats of Jericho and Ai, so they decided to surrender to him without war. Knowing, however, that the children of Israel would not make a covenant with any nation that dwelt in this land, they sent messengers to Joshua to deceive him.

These messengers gave a false account of the neighborhood and history of their people. They said to Joshua: "From a very far off country thy servants have come; we have heard much of the Lord thy God, of His fame and all that He has done for Israel. We come to thee and ask thee to make a covenant of peace with us." They then continued: "This our bread we took hot

when we left our homes and now it has become dry and moldy; these wine bottles, which we filled, were new, but now they are rent; and these garments and shoes have been torn during our long journey."

After listening to their tale, Joshua made a covenant with them, and ate bread with them, which was a symbol of peace. After three days, however, Joshua was told that the Gibeonites were their neighbors and were dwelling among them. In spite of the fact that they were deceived, Joshua and the princes of the congregation did not break their promise nor violate their pledge. An oath was ever sacred with the children of Israel. They inflicted a well-deserved punishment upon the Gibeonites by forcing them to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the congregation and the altar in the house of the Lord.

When the kings of Canaan heard that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made a league with Joshua, and, moreover, had placed themselves under his protection, they at once marched against the city and besieged it. At the request of the Gibeonites, who implored his help, Joshua marched quickly during the night from Gilgal, fell upon the united armies, and routed them.

When the Lord had delivered the Amorites into the hand of Israel, Joshua prayed to God in the sight of all the people, saying: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon, in the valley of Ayalon." And it came to pass as Joshua had prayed. There is nothing miraculous in the whole story thus told in the book "Sefer Ha-

jashar." By the words, "Sun, stand thou still," Joshua was requesting the Lord to lengthen the day until he could crush the enemy, fearing that the approaching night, with its darkness, might prevent the execution of his plan.

The five defeated kings fled and hid themselves in the cave of Makkedah. When Joshua was informed of their flight, he said: "Roll great stones before the mouth of the cave, and set men over it to guard them. Do not stay, but pursue your enemies, and do not allow them to enter their cities again." After the battle and the pursuit of the enemy were over, the people returned in peace to the camp of Joshua at Makkedah, who ordered them to open the mouth of the cave and bring out the five kings. This they did, and Joshua hanged them on five trees.

Joshua had now conquered almost the whole south of Canaan; he then marched against the united kings of the north, who, under the leadership of Yabin, King of Chazor, came on to fight Israel with a tremendous army. But the Lord said unto Joshua: "Be not afraid of them, for to-morrow about this time I will give them all into the hands of Israel." Joshua and all the men with him came suddenly upon them by the waters of Merom, and they captured the city of Chazor, and they smote all the kings with the sword. Likewise, all the cities of these kings were captured by Joshua.

Thus he conquered almost the whole country of Canaan. With the exception of Gibeon, every piece of land had to be won by force of arms.

Even the Anakim, the giant inhabitants of the mountains, were utterly destroyed by Joshua. His conquest of Canaan took seven years. We, therefore, call Israel's first campaign in the Promised Land, during which time they conquered thirty-one kings, "The Seven Years' War."

XXVII. DIVIDING THE LAND

It was in the eighth year of their stay in Canaan that Joshua, Eliezar the High-priest, and the chief officers of the people divided the conquered land among the Israelites by means of lots. This was by no means an easy task, as the number of people in each tribe was not the same. It was, nevertheless, carried out much better than had been expected. There was only one tribe, that of Ephraim, which on that occasion, and also throughout the whole course of Biblical history, proved itself to be rather quarrelsome and discontented. It dated, no doubt, from the time when Jacob, in his blessing, preferred the younger son of Joseph, Ephraim, to the older one, Manasseh. This preference most likely made him very vain, so that his descendants always manifested this trait.

Moreover, at the very hour when they were ready to give to each tribe its various land, Ephraim (joined by Manasseh) appeared before Joshua and urgently requested the great general to give them a larger portion. "Why hast thou given me," Ephraim asked Joshua, "but one lot

and one portion as an inheritance, seeing that I am a numerous people?" But Joshua did not pay much attention to him, and answered: "If thou art a numerous people, then get up to the wood country and cut down a space for thyself; there is the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, if the mountains of Ephraim be too narrow for thee" (Joshua xvii. 15).

How different was the modest way in which Caleb, the son of Yepunneh, brought his claims before Joshua. "Thou knowest well," Caleb said, "the word which the Lord spoke to Moses concerning thyself and me in Kadesh-Barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses sent me to spy out the land; and I brought him word as it was in my heart. And Moses swore that day, saying: 'Surely, the land whereon thy foot has trodden shall belong to thee for an inheritance, and to thy children forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord.' And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive as He has spoken. Give me, therefore, that mountain whereof the Lord spoke on that day." Then Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron unto Caleb for an inheritance, and it became the chief city of the tribe of Judah.

What a hale and hearty man Caleb must have been at the age of eighty-five years! He was one of the most faithful attendants of Moses and Joshua, and was noted as one of the best workers in the house of God and Israel. He deserved the blessing so graciously bestowed upon him by his friend and colaborer, Joshua.

The tribe of Levi did not receive any special

lands, as they were servants of the Lord; they received forty cities, with pastures, of which six were named as places of refuge. The Levites were distributed among the tribes. The Ark and the Tabernacle were kept in Shiloh.

XXVIII. THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

Joshua then summoned before him the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh and said to them: "You have done everything that Moses commanded you. Now, since God has given rest unto your brethren, go ye home again to your habitations in the land of your inheritance, on the other side of the Jordan. But take heed that you practice the commandments and the law which Moses has commanded you: to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and cleave unto Him with all your heart and soul." Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away.

As a sign that they intended to serve the Lord, they built an altar within the boundaries of their land, which was placed there to signify to their descendants and posterity that they belonged to the large brotherhood of Israel. This altar, however, was never used for sacrificial purposes.

When Joshua had grown old, he assembled all Israel and said to them: "I have become old. You have seen everything that the Lord your God has done for you. Therefore, be very steadfast and keep unto all that is written in the

books of the law of Moses, so as not to turn aside therefrom, either to the right or to the left. You shall not bind yourselves to the nations which are around you, or worship their gods. Only to the Lord your God you shall cleave and love Him. Behold, I am going this day the way of all the earth, therefore understand and know well that not one thing of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all of them have come to pass unto you. When ye serve other gods and bow yourselves down to them, then will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from the good land which the Lord has given unto you."

Afterward, Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel in Shechem. He addressed them fervently, and reminded them of all the events which had happened from the days of Terah, the father of Abraham, who, living on the other side of the Euphrates, had served other gods, until the recent time, when they had come into the possession of Canaan. "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in truth and sincerity, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord alone. If it be displeasing in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom else you will serve; as for myself and my house, we will serve the Lord as before."

The people answered him, saying, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord and to serve other gods." But Joshua replied, "It is not easy to

serve the Lord, for he is a holy and watchful God, who will not have any indulgence for your transgressions and sins." But the people answered again, "No, we will serve the Eternal." Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve Him only."

On that day Joshua renewed the old covenant with the people. As a memorial of it he took a great stone and set it up under the oak that was near the Sanctuary of the Lord. Then Joshua said unto all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be among us as witness against you that you may not deny your God."

Joshua died soon afterward, 110 years old, having reached the same age that Joseph had attained. They buried him in Timnath-Serach, which is on the mountain of Ephraim. But the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought out of Egypt, were buried in Shechem, in a part of the field which Jacob had bought of the sons of Chamor, the father of Shechem, and it remained the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

Thus Joshua, the Ephraimite, and Joseph, his great ancestor, are not far from each other in their last resting-places. Eliezar, the son of Aaron, also died soon after, and they buried him on the hill of Gibeat-Phineas. His son Phineas became his successor.

Concerning Joshua, the Bible does not tell us of one single transgression, nor of one false step that he took during his lifetime. Among all the

men in the Biblical history, he may be pointed out as that person who was entirely free from stubbornness. He showed the most conscientious faithfulness toward the holy law, and the responsible office intrusted to his hands.

His courage was mingled with humility, his strength with belief, and his wisdom with obedience and fear of God. He had a gentle heart, but, when necessity demanded, he did not refrain from using strong and energetic measures for the vindication of the law. The people were happy under Joshua's rule, and we might call this period of their independence the time of their national glory.

XXIX. THE FIRST JUDGES

After the death of Joshua, the children of Israel for some time kept the promise they made to him. But later on, when the old generation died out and a new one had arisen, they turned away from God and His laws, and worshiped the idols of their neighbors. Besides, that common national tie which had united all the various tribes into one strong union during the time of Joshua, lost its binding power. As each tribe insisted on acting independently, and on defending only its own rights, it was natural that the national welfare of the whole body of Israel was considerably weakened.

No wonder that Israel's enemies, the Canaanites, took advantage of such disagreements. Seeing its own weakness, Judah joined with Simeon and

together undertook some expeditions against the Canaanites. The Lord gave the Canaanites into their hands, and they slew almost ten thousand men at Beseck.

This victory was so overwhelming that the king of the Canaanites quickly fled. They pursued him, caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his big toes. Then the king said: "Seventy kings with their thumbs and great toes cut off gathered food under my table; as I have done, so has God requited me." They brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

There is just retribution in this world, and by the very means that we sin we are often punished. Jacob deceived his father by disguising himself in other garments; he himself was deceived by his own sons, also with a garment, for they brought the coat of many colors to him to tell him of the death of Joseph. Pharaoh, who caused the male children of the Israelites to be thrown into the Nile, found his death in the waters of the Red Sea.

Whenever the children of Israel turned from the ways of God, by doing evil and practicing idolatry, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies, who plundered and ill-treated them. Their sufferings becoming so intolerable that they could not endure their cruel bonds any longer, they would repent and cry to the Almighty Father to save them. Then God always caused a leader to come forth from among them; one who was able to raise the drooping spirit of the nation by his ability and valor.

Such men who, by their heroic devotion and sound judgment, delivered the people from their bondage, and, moreover, were able to direct their national destinies, were called Judges (*Shofetim*).

At first the children of Israel were given into the hands of the King of Mesopotamia. Eight long years they were subject to this evil and tyrannical ruler. In their great need they cried to God, and the Lord sent Othniel the son of Kenaz to deliver them. Othniel had already proven his bravery by his conquest of Kiryath-Sefer. Such a man, full of courage and devotion to God, naturally was a great and wise judge. It was as if the spirit of the Almighty was over him; he was a valiant champion of God and his nation, and he overthrew the Mesopotamian king. The land enjoyed peace and prosperity under him for forty years.

After the death of Othniel, the children of Israel again fell into their evil ways, and did many things that were displeasing in the eyes of God. They forsook the ways of their fathers and practiced idolatry. Then the Lord gave them into the hands of Moab and Amalek, who smote them and took possession of Jericho. Thus they became subject to Eglon, King of Moab, for eighteen years. Then they cried to the Lord for help, and God sent Ehud, the son of Gera, a Benjaminite, as a deliverer. Although his right arm was lamed, he was a brave and daring soldier. He was commissioned by the Israelites to bring a present to the King of Moab, and, when alone with Eglon, slew him with his sword.

Ehud made good his escape before the act became known. When he arrived at Seirāh, he blew his horn on the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel gathered about him. "Follow me," he said, "for the Lord has delivered your enemies, the Moabites, into your hands." They then occupied the fords of the Jordan toward Moab, and did not allow any man to pass over. They smote Moab at that time and killed about ten thousand men; all men of great valor.

After this, Moab was humbled, and the land had rest for eighty years. Ehud was followed by Shamgar, the son of Anath, who smote six hundred of the Philistines with an oxgoad and thus delivered the Israelites from the enemies' hands.

XXX. DEBORAH

As the children of Israel still continued to do evil in the eyes of God, He delivered them into the hands of Yabin, King of Canaan, who resided at Chazor. This king had a famous general, Sisera, through whose ability he had succeeded in conquering the Israelites. So the children of Israel cried to God on account of their hardships, as Yabin oppressed them very cruelly.

At that time there was a poetess and prophetess in Israel, whose name was Deborah, and the people came to her for judgment. Her heart was moved by Israel's sufferings, and she sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam, and said to him: "The Lord our God has commanded that thou shalt go toward

Mount Tabor; therefore take with thee ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and Zebulon; and I will draw unto thee Sissera, the captain of Yabin, together with his chariots and army, and I will give him into thy hand." Then Barak said unto her: "If thou goest with me, I will go; if not, I will not go." Upon this, she answered him, saying: "If thou demand it, I will go with thee; but know that this will not be much to thine own honor, as people will say that the enemy has been delivered into the hands of a woman."

Having thus spoken, Deborah went with Barak to Kadesh. He selected ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, and went with them to Mount Tabor. When Sissera heard that Barak had gone up to Mount Tabor he took all his iron chariots, nine hundred in number, and all his soldiers, and assembled them near the brook of Kishon. Then Deborah said to Barak: "Rise quickly, for this is the day on which the Lord has given Sissera into thy hand; behold, the Lord has gone out before thee." With swiftness, Barak threw himself with his army unexpectedly upon the enemy. God strengthened him in his fight, and confused Sissera and his army. The defeat was so great that Sissera alighted from his chariot and fled on foot. But Barak pursued the enemy and routed them completely. Sissera was killed later by a woman named Jael. So did God humble Yabin, the King of Canaan, on that day, and the land had a rest for forty years.

There is a beautiful song, full of poetic and

pathetic descriptions, called the "Song of Deborah," which was sung by that heroic woman and the brave general Barak in celebration of the great victory. Some of the words of this song are as follows :

When despair had broken out in Israel,
Then the people offered themselves willingly;
Therefore praise ye the Lord.

Hear, O kings, give ear, O princes,
I unto the Lord will sing;
I will sing praises unto the Lord,
The God of Israel.

Deserted were the open towers in Israel;
They were forsaken,
Until I arose, Deborah,
Until I arose, a mother in Israel.

My thankfulness is to the governors of Israel,
That offered themselves willingly for the people;
Praise ye the Lord !

Deborah praises those tribes who so willingly assisted in the battle, especially Ephraim, who was living in the land formerly inhabited by Amalek; Benjamin and his armies; and Zebulun that "handled the pen of the writer"; Issachar, too, was carried away by his patriotic feeling. Having thus praised the tribes who aided in the great fight, she then reproaches those who kept themselves aloof from the combat :

At the streams of Reuben,
Mighty resolutions were planned.
Why didst thou sit among the sheepfolds,
To hear the bleating of the flock?

- At the streams of Reuben
There was held great council;
And Dan naturally dwells with his sheep!
Asher remains on his seashore:
But Zebulon it was that endangered his life unto
death,
And Naphtali, on the high places of the field.

In this beautiful song three women are mentioned, of whom one, Deborah, this mother of Israel, is a bright example of real patriotism. We can learn from her that noble actions can best be accomplished when a Barak (Thunderer) is supported in the various works he undertakes by a woman with the sacred flame of enthusiasm. Concerning the second woman, Jael, the wife of Cheber the Kenite, is praised by Deborah for slaying Sissera.

- As regards the third woman, the mother of Sissera, we see in her the true motherly anxiety for her son. In vain she looks for him through the lattice of the window. She has a presentiment that some evil has happened to her son, but she does not venture to express her fears. She asks constantly: "Why tarries his chariot so long? Why lag the wheels of his chariot?" And though the women in attendance upon her try to raise her drooping spirits, she continually inquires, "Why tarries his chariot so long?"
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XXXI. GIDEON

The children of Israel again sinned against God and worshiped idols. On account of this, the Lord gave them over for seven years into the hands of the Midianites, who oppressed them severely. Like locusts, the Midianites spread in a numberless multitude over the whole country, destroying everything. They made Israel poor and the people suffered under their wretched condition. Then the children of Israel anxiously cried to God for help, and He sent a man to deliver them from their oppressors.

One day, while Gideon, the son of Joash, was threshing wheat, an angel of the Lord appeared before him and said: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. Go in thy might and save Israel from the hands of the Midianites." But Gideon replied: "Wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor and I am the least in my father's house." And the Lord said to him: "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Gideon built an altar unto the Lord on the place and called it "Adonai-Shalom" (God is Peace).

On the same night the Lord told Gideon to throw down the altar of Baal, which belonged to his father, and to cut down the grove that surrounded it, and to build an altar to the Lord instead. He took ten of his servants and did as the Lord had commanded him. Gideon was right

in first attacking the idolatry in his home city, before he accepted the leadership in Israel. A good example often teaches more than the wisest precept.

When the people of the city beheld what had been done to the altar of Baal, and it became known who had destroyed it, they demanded the life of Gideon. But Joash asked them to wait until the morrow, saying, "If Baal is a god, let him contend for himself." From that time on, the people called Gideon "Jerubbaal," saying, "Let Baal contend against him, because he has overthrown his altar."

After this event the Midianites, the Amalekites, and other people of the east gathered together and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. The spirit of God came over Gideon, and he sent messengers to collect soldiers from the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.

Then Gideon said to God: "Give me a sign that Thou wilt save Israel through my hand. Behold, I put this fleece of wool on the threshing-floor; if there be dew on the fleece, and all the ground around be dry, then I shall know that Thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as Thou hast spoken." And it was so; when he rose early in the morning he found dew on the fleece, but the ground was dry. Hereupon Gideon said again to the Lord: "Let not Thy anger be kindled against me; let me have another proof, I pray Thee; let it be dry upon the fleece alone, and upon all the ground let there be dew." And God did as Gideon asked; the fleece was dry, while the ground was wet with dew.

Then the Lord told Gideon that he had too many men in his army, and that he should permit all who felt any fear to return to their homes. About 22,000 men departed, and about 10,000 remained. And God said again that there were still too many, and told Gideon to take the men to the water to drink, and all those that lapped the water with the tongue, like a dog laps the water, were to be separated from those who bent the knee to drink. Only 300 lapped the water, and with these God told Gideon, He would save Israel, for they had never knelt in worship before Baal. The remainder of the army was sent home.

At night Gideon divided his men into three companies and gave each man a trumpet and a pitcher with a torch therein. He instructed them to do as he did, when they had surrounded the enemy's camp. At midnight they suddenly blew their trumpets and broke the pitchers, holding the torches aloft in their left hands. Then they shouted aloud, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Confusion seized those in the camp and they fought each other and finally fled in all directions. Then Gideon sent men from the other tribes in pursuit of the Midianites.

With his 300 men, Gideon pursued the two kings of Midian, who had escaped with a part of their army, over the Jordan. While on his way he requested the people of Succoth and Penuel to give food to his soldiers, but they refused and mocked him. This made Gideon very angry and he resolved to punish them on his return.

The Midianites, who had crossed the Jordan,

felt themselves so safe that they were not prepared for any further attack. Gideon fell suddenly on them and smote and routed them. The two kings were captured, and he slew them with his own hand.

Gideon did not forget the punishment which he had promised the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel. On returning from his campaign, he took the princes and elders of Succoth and whipped them with thorn-branches and briers. The inhabitants of Penuel were treated in a similar way; he tore down their towers and slew their elders.

After Gideon had saved the people of Israel from the hands of Midian, they said unto him :

“Be thou our king, thou and thy children after thee.” But Gideon replied : “I will not be a ruler over you; God alone shall be your ruler !”

The 300 men with whom Gideon had defeated the Midianites had not knelt down before Baal, and, though few in number, yet they conquered the enemy because they were worshipers of the true God.

Gideon did not become either proud or ambitious because of his great victories. Though a crown was offered him, he refused it for himself as well as for his children. And yet there was weakness in Gideon : he had no correct idea of what the law required of him; and he always asked for signs from God.

The growth and prosperity of states and institutions often rise and fall with the appearance and death of great men. Under Gideon's rule of forty years, Israel rose to a noticeable height

of power and success; with his death, it fell quickly by fraud, tyranny, and rebellion.

XXXII. THE BRAMBLE KING

A man like Gideon, who had directed for so many years the destinies of Israel, could not be easily replaced. Although he refused to accept the kingship, both for himself and sons, this did not deter one of his sons from striving for that high position. This son was called "Abimelech," which means "My father is king." He determined to become king in Israel, and did not hesitate to commit the basest crime recorded in Jewish history. With the aid of hired evil-doers, he killed all of his brothers, excepting the youngest, Jotham, who escaped. After this atrocious act, Abimelech was made king by the inhabitants of Shechem and Beth-Millo.

When Jotham was told of this, he went to the top of Mount Gerizim, and said: "Hearken, ye men of Shechem. The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the olive-tree: 'Reign thou over us!' but the olive-tree said unto them: 'Should I give up my fatness, wherewith through me they honor God and man, and shall go to rule over the trees?' Then the trees said unto the fig-tree: 'Come thou and reign over us!' But the fig-tree said unto them: 'Should I give up my sweetness and my good fruit and go to rule over the trees?' Then the trees said unto the vine: 'Come thou and reign

over us!' But the vine said unto them: 'Should I give up my wine, which rejoices God and man, and go to rule over the trees?' Then said the trees unto the bramble: 'Come thou and reign over us!' And the bramble said unto the trees: 'If in truth you want me to reign over you, then come and seek protection in my shadow; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!' I ask you now," Jotham continued, "have you acted wisely and honorably in making Abimelech your king? Have you dealt righteously toward Jerubbaal and his house, who had fought and striven for you, and saved you from Midian's hand? Now you have raised him who slaughtered all his brothers to be your king. If you think that you have acted righteously, then rejoice in Abimelech, the Bramble King, and let him also rejoice in you; but if not, let fire come out of Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth-Millo, and likewise let fire come out from Shechem and devour Abimelech."

This parable is the oldest one known. It is full of striking truth and bitter sarcasm, and imparts a lesson which appeals to our love of justice and common sense.

Jotham fled to Beer and remained there. After Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, God sent an evil spirit over him and the men of Shechem. They revolted against him, but Abimelech defeated them. Then he went to Thebez, besieged and captured it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the

people. When Abimelech approached the tower to set fire to it, a woman cast a piece of millstone from the roof upon his head and crushed his skull. Knowing he was fatally hurt, he called to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that people shall not say that a woman has slain me." What a false and peculiar idea this wicked man had about "honor"! He who did not feel any dishonor in killing his own brothers was ashamed of being killed by a woman.

The deserved fate of a tyrant is often seen in the manner of his death. The armor-bearer of Abimelech killed his master without hesitation, and the slain man was at once forsaken by every one. The attention shown to him while alive, and bought by him for heavy wages from evil followers, was gone at the very moment of his death.

Abimelech was followed by Tolah, of the tribe of Issachar. He had his seat in Shamir, upon the mount of Ephraim, and ruled Israel about twenty-three years. After him came Jair, from Gilead. One of the ancestors of Jair was the son of Manasseh. It is reported of him that he had thirty sons, and that he possessed thirty cities. He must have been a very rich man, and this is all that can be said of him.

XXXIII. JEPHTHAH

As the children of Israel again worshiped idols, God delivered them into the hands of their enemies, the Ammonites, who oppressed them for eighteen years. When their afflictions became unbearable, they cried to the Lord and confessed the wrong they had done. But this time the Lord did not heed their prayers. He said: "Go to the idols you have chosen and ask them for help. However, as they put away from their midst all the idols they had worshiped, God had pity on them. In the mean time the Ammonites gathered their forces and encamped in the land of Gilead, on the other side of the Jordan; but the children of Israel also collected their troops and camped at a place called Mizpeh. Here the chiefs of the army consulted as to whom they should choose as their leader. Their choice fell upon Jephthah, a man of Gilead.

This Jephthah, although a man of faults, had nevertheless a noble character. He is one of the finest personages in Biblical history. He was brought up with stepbrothers, who drove him from home soon after the death of their father. Being self-reliant and bold-hearted, he joined a band of roving companions, with whom he led an adventurous life. In spite of this mode of living, he retained his good name, else his countrymen would not have honored him with the leadership of their army.

When the elders of Israel came to him and offered him the generalship in the war against the Ammonites, he showed himself truly dignified. He did not conceal the deep pain he had felt in having been expelled from his father's house, but on the other hand, he did not want to return evil for evil. His country was in danger, and with true patriotism he was willing to do anything for her deliverance. Besides, he exemplified the great precept of our law: "Do not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou mayest rebuke thy brother." Then again: "Do not revenge thyself, and do not bear a grudge toward the sons of thy people, but love thy neighbor as thyself."

He followed the elders at once, but did not accept the position as leader, telling them that he must gain such an office by combat and victory. Unlike other warriors he did not fall suddenly upon the enemy's camp, but first sought the ways of peace, as it is written: "If thou approachest a city to conquer it, first seek to offer conditions of peace to it." He sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, asking him why he had come to wage war on the Israelites. The king answered him that Israel had taken away his lands when they came out of Egypt. Jephthah sent him word that this was not so, but that by conquest these lands had been taken by Moses many years before. The King of the Ammonites was not satisfied with this answer and resolved to give battle. And Jephthah was forced to fight.

Before the battle Jephthah made a rash vow. He said: "If Thou, O Lord, wilt deliver the children

of Ammon into my hands, then shall it be that whatsoever comes first out of the doors of my house to meet me, I will offer up for a burnt offering." Jephthah then attacked the Ammonites and defeated them. When he returned to Mizpeh, to his house, his daughter came out with timbrels and dances; she was his only child. When he saw her, he rent his garment and said: "Alas! my daughter, thou hast bent me down very low, and hast troubled me very much, for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back." And the daughter, worthy of so great and noble a father, answered: "If thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do to me in accordance with what has proceeded out of thy mouth." Then she said: "Let me alone for two months, so that I may go to the mountains and bewail my hard lot." After two months she returned, and Jephthah fulfilled his vow upon her.

The opinions concerning "the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter" differ very much. Some say she was offered up and killed, while others believe that she only had to remain unmarried. So much is true, her name was never forgotten. The daughters of Israel, from year to year, mourned and lamented her four days in the year.

It is said by our sages that the priests in Israel, at Jephthah's time, having influence upon the hearts of the people, might have told the pious judge and general that they were competent to declare null and void all vows made in a moment of excitement. But it seems that they did not do anything for Jephthah.

After this tragic occurrence, the men of Ephraim, owing to their quarrelsome nature, did not show much pity for Jephthah and his unfortunate child. On the contrary, feeling hurt that he had not called them to help defeat the Ammonites; they expressed the grudge they bore him in these threatening words, "We shall set thy house on fire!" War broke out between the men of Gilead and the men of Ephraim, and the men of Gilead smote the Ephraimites with the sword, slaying thousands of them.

Jephthah judged Israel six years, and, when he died, was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

After him, Ibzan of Bethelm judged Israel seven years. He was a man of wealth and authority. He was followed by Elon, the Zebulonite, who judged Israel ten years. He was succeeded by Abdon, the son of Hillel, the Pirathonite. He judged Israel for a long time, but did not do much to further her national growth.

XXXIV. SAMSON

When the Israelites again displeased God, as they had done so often before, by disobeying His commandments, they were given into the hands of the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years. Only by harmony and unity could the tribes shake off their heavy yoke.

At this time a man of the tribe of Dan, named Manoah (rest), lived in Zorah. He had no children. An angel of God appeared to his wife,

saying: "Behold, a son will be born to thee! Beware, and drink neither wine nor strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean. A Nazarite of God shall the boy be from his birth; no razor shall come on his head, and he shall deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

After this a son was born to Manoah, whom he called Samson (~~son~~), "the sun." His parents observed everything that the angel had told them. The son grew up and God blessed him. It is usually the case when parents have only one child, they spoil him by over-love. So it was in the case of Samson. His parents overlooked his faults, and he became self-willed. Once he went to Timnath, in the land of the Philistines, and there saw a woman whom he liked. When he returned home, he said to his father and, mother: "I have seen in Timnath a woman of the daughters of the Philistines; she pleases me well, and I wish that you may take her for me as a wife." But his parents replied: "Is there no wife among the daughters of thy people, that thou goest to marry one of the Philistines?" He insisted upon his choice, and they consented to it. This was most likely in the plan of God, as thereby Samson should meet the Philistines.

Once, while on the way to Timnath, a young lion came roaring toward him. Then the spirit of the Lord came suddenly over him, and with his bare hands he rent the lion as he would have rent a kid. Some time afterward, when he passed the same place, he turned aside from the road to see the carcass of the lion. In the body of the

animal he saw a swarm of bees and honey, and he took thereof and ate it.

On the first day of his wedding feast, which lasted seven days, Samson said to his thirty male companions: "I will give you a riddle; if you can solve it during the seven days, I will give you thirty fine shirts and thirty festive robes, but if you cannot solve it you must give me the same number of garments." Then they said unto him, "Let us hear thy riddle." And he told them this: "Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

His companions could not solve the riddle. On the seventh day they said to Samson's wife: "Persuade thy husband to explain the riddle to thee, and then tell it to us; if not, we shall burn thee and thy father's house with fire." She wept so long before him and worried him so much with her questions, that at last he revealed the secret to her. She then told it to her friends. Before the sun went down on the seventh day the men said to him: "What is sweeter than honey? What is fiercer than the lion?" and he replied to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have answered my riddle." Then he went down to Ascalon, slew thirty Philistines, took their garments from them, and gave them to the young men. He was so angered about this affair that he returned to his parents' house.

After some time, in the days of the wheat-harvest, he went again to Timnath to visit his wife, but her father would not allow him to see her. This angered Samson very much and he said,

"Now it is not my fault, if I do evil to the Philistines, for my wife has been taken from me." He caught 300 foxes, tied them in pairs by their tails, put a burning torch between the tails, and then chased the animals into the standing corn of the Philistines. Thus he burnt up both the stacks and the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives. The Philistines revenged themselves by burning to death his former wife and her father. But Samson made them suffer for this, by smiting them with great slaughter.

Then he went into the mountains of Judah and tarried there. But the Philistines came after him and encamped in Judah. The people of Judah, however, were afraid of them, and resolved to deliver up Samson to his enemies. For this reason 3,000 men went to Samson and said to him: "Dost thou not know that the Philistines rule over us? Why hast thou brought this trouble on us?" But he answered: "As they did unto me, so have I done unto them." Then the people said: "We have come here to find thee and to deliver thee up to the Philistines." Upon this he replied: "Swear unto me that you yourselves will not harm me." And they answered him: "We ourselves will not hurt you; we will only bind you and deliver you into the hands of the Philistines." Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him to the Philistines. Then the spirit of the Lord came suddenly over Samson, and the ropes which bound him became as flax threads, and they dropped from his arms. On that spot he found a fresh jaw-bone

of an ass, and with it slew a thousand men. The Philistines pursued him afterward, but they could not find him. Once he went to Gaza, a Philistine city, to stay over night. When the inhabitants heard of this, they closed the gates of the city and prepared to seize him in the morning and kill him. But Samson arose in the night, took hold of the gates, tore them away with the bolts, put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain.

XXXV. SAMSON'S FATE

In the valley of Sorek lived a Philistine woman named Delilah (the tender-hearted or gentle one), with whom Samson was very friendly. So the Philistine princes went to her and said: "Try to win Samson over to thee, and persuade him to tell thee wherein his great strength lies, and by what means we may be able to subdue him, and we will each give thee eleven hundred pieces of silver." Then Delilah, whose love of money was greater than her love of Samson, said to him, "Tell me wherein lies thy great strength, and wherewith canst thou be bound and subdued." And Samson answered her, "If they bind me with seven moist ropes that have not yet been dried, then shall I become as weak as any other man."

Delilah reported this to the princes, and they sent seven moist ropes which had not yet been dried. Then she bound Samson with these ropes

and called out to him, "The Philistines are upon thee!" But he tore asunder the ropes as if they were threads of tow, when they were touched by fire. Delilah was very angry because he had deceived her, and said to him, "Let me entreat thee to reveal to me the secret of thy strength!" Samson answered, "If they bind me fast with new ropes that have never been used in work, then shall I become weak and like any other man." Thereupon Delilah bound him with new ropes and said to him, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" But Samson tore off the ropes from his arms like threads.

Delilah did not stop her questions. She worried Samson daily, and urged him so much that his soul became impatient and he longed to die. Thereupon he revealed to her his whole heart and said to her: "I have been a Nazarite of God from my birth; a razor has never passed over my head; if I were shaved and my hair cut, my strength would depart from me and I would become weak and be like any other man." When Delilah saw that he had revealed the truth to her, she sent for the princes of the Philistines. They came and brought her the promised money. While Samson slept, she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head, and his strength departed from him. She then awakened him, saying, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" As he awoke out of his sleep, he thought he would make himself free again as before; but he knew not that the Lord had departed from him.

The Philistines seized him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, bound him with fetters of copper, and made him grind the mill in the prison-house. However, his hair began to grow again. Then the Philistines came together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon (an idol, half man and half fish), and to rejoice because Samson had been delivered into their hands. They had a festival, and when they were merry they cried, "Let us call Samson that he may be sport for us." Then Samson was fetched from the prison, and all made sport of him. Angered by this, he said to the lad who had led him in from the prison, "Take me to the pillars upon which the house is supported, that I may rest against them." The house was filled with men and women; all the princes of the Philistines were there, and upon the roof were three thousand men and women who looked on and rejoiced to see Samson so shamefully treated.

Then Samson prayed to God: "O Lord, remember me, and strengthen me once more, that I may avenge myself on the Philistines for the sake of my two eyes." He threw his arms around the two middle pillars by which the house was supported, and said, "Let me die with the Philistines." He bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the princes and the people who were therein. The numbers he slew at his death were more than those he had slain during all his lifetime. His brethren took his body and buried it in the burying-place of Manoah, his father. Samson had judged Israel twenty-seven years.

Love and money are two keys to the human heart. Money swayed Delilah's heart, while Samson was carried away by impulse and blind passion. Samson was strong in body and great in physical strength, but weak and feeble in moral principles and character.

XXXVI. NAOMI AND RUTH

The Book of Judges tells us how wavering and unstable the Israelites were in their allegiance to God, and how often judges had to be chosen by Him in order to free them from their oppressors. The Book of Ruth gives us a beautiful description of home or family life in those times. From this we can see that, in spite of all transgressions and unlawful conduct, the true spirit of good yet dwelt among the Israelites.

There was a famine in the land of Palestine, and a man from Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Elimelech, left his country with his wife Naomi and his two sons, to try his fortune in the land of Moab. Soon after his arrival in Moab, Elimelech died. His two sons took for themselves Moabitish wives, of whom one was called Ruth and the other Orpha. Some years later, these two sons also died, and Naomi was alone in the world. She deeply mourned the loss of all her loved ones.

Feeling keenly the trials which had come to her in a strange land, Naomi resolved to return to her native country. She left Moab accompanied

by her two daughters-in-law. On the way Naomi said to them: "Return, each of you, to the land of your birth. May God deal kindly with you as you have dealt with my dead and with me, and may you find rest in a new home of your own." Then she kissed both of them and wept bitterly. But the daughters said: "We shall not leave thee; we shall go with thee to thy house and thy country." But Naomi replied to them, saying: "Why will you go with me? I feel much more bitter pain than you, because the hand of the Lord has been heavy on me." And Orpha, being of a more worldly nature, kissed her mother-in-law and returned to her own country.

Ruth, on the contrary, clung lovingly to her. Naomi urged her to return, like Orpha, to her people. "Pray follow her," she said, "and go back." But Ruth answered: "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to part from thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: may God do so to me, and may He so continue to do if aught but death part me from thee."

Can devotion for a human being be expressed more beautifully than in these sentiments uttered by Ruth to Naomi? Who was the nobler of the two, Naomi, who was so beloved, or Ruth, who felt such an affectionate attachment for her mother-in-law? When Naomi saw that Ruth was resolved to go with her, she said no more.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city

was stirred on Naomi's account. The traces of misfortune, marked on her face, must have changed her considerably, so that many asked, "Is that Naomi?" When she heard this question, she said bitterly: "Call me not Naomi (the lovable or joyful one), but call me Mara (the tired one). Full of wealth I went out, and empty-handed has the Lord brought me home again!" In dwelling on her sorrow she must have forgotten that she had brought with her a real treasure in the person of Ruth.

XXXVII. RUTH AND BOAZ

One day Ruth went into the field to glean, as other poor people did, after the reapers. It happened that the field was owned by Boaz, who was related to Naomi. He was a distinguished and noble-hearted man.

How dearly Boaz was loved by his workers we learn from the manner in which they greeted him. When he made his appearance among them, he greeted them with, "The Lord be with you, my friends," to which each replied, "The Lord bless thee, my master." These words should be written in letters of gold in our homes, offices, and workshops and wherever there are servants and employees, so that we may be ever mindful of our conduct to those who serve us and those whom we serve.

When Boaz saw Ruth and was told who she was, he gave her permission to glean in his fields until

the harvest was over. Thereupon she said unto him: "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take notice of me, seeing that I am a stranger?" Then Boaz answered her, saying: "It has been told to me what thou hast done for thy mother-in-law after the death of thy husband. Thou hast left thy father and mother and thy native land and hast come to a people thou knewest not; may the Lord recompense thy work, and may thy reward be complete from Him under whose wings thou art come to seek shelter."

When evening came, Ruth returned to her mother-in-law and showed her what she had gleaned. Naomi asked her: "Where hast thou gleaned to-day and where hast thou wrought, my daughter?" And she answered, "The name of the man with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz." Then Naomi said: "Blessed be he unto the Lord, who has not withheld his kindness from the living and from the dead. This man," she added, "is our near relative; he is one who can redeem our inheritance." The inheritance of Elimelech had been sold; but there was a way by which it could be regained.

After the harvesting was ended, Naomi said to Ruth: "My daughter, I will seek a resting-place for thee, where it may be well with thee. You know that Boaz is our kinsman. He is a sincere man. Perhaps he will redeem the inheritance of thy father-in-law and of thy husband." Naomi hoped that Boaz would take Ruth for his wife; for if he intended to redeem the property of his

dead kinsman, he was also obliged to marry the widow. But there was a nearer relative than Boaz, who was more entitled to redeem the inheritance and to marry Ruth.

Boaz went one day to the gates of the city where the elders assembled and waited there. And the very kinsman of whom we have spoken, passed by. Then Boaz called out to him, "Turn thou here, my friend, and sit down." Then he said unto the kinsman: "Naomi, who has returned from the country of Moab, has a parcel of land to sell. I inform thee of it, saying: 'Buy it before those sitting here and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, do so; but if not, then tell me, as I come after thee.'"

And the kinsman said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz continued: "On the day that thou buyest the field out of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it also from Ruth, the Moabitess, whom thou must take as wife." Then the kinsman said: "If that is the case, I am not able to redeem it for myself, lest I injure my own inheritance; therefore do thou redeem it instead." Boaz then said to the elders and unto all the people: "You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that belonged to Elimelech and his sons out of the hand of Naomi; and also Ruth, the Moabitess, have I obtained for myself as wife."

God remembered Ruth and gave her a son; and the women said to Naomi: "Blessed be the Lord, who has not allowed thee to be wanting a kinsman; and may his name become famous in Israel; and may he be unto thee as one who

refresheth thy soul and nourisheth thy old age, for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, is better to thee than seven sons."

The son who was born to Ruth was called Obed. He was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David. In his day David felt kindly toward Moab. Seeking shelter for his parents, whose safety was endangered by Saul, he went to the King of Moab and said to him, "Let my father and mother, I pray thee, go forth with thee until I can know what God will do for me" (Samuel i. 3).

The Book of Ruth does not tell us of warlike and valiant deeds, of a Gideon, a Jephthah, or a Samson; but it teaches us that we find goodness and kindness in all religions and among all peoples, and that we should love all mankind with all our heart and soul.

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